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Hearts and Hands.—Frontispiece.

They heard him talking to the flowers. p. 45.

# CHILDREN'S

# HEARTS AND HANDS.

"Father and Saviour! plant within this bosom
The seeds of holiness, and bid them blossom
In fragrance and in beauty bright and vernal,
And spring eternal;

"Then place them in those everlasting gardens
Where angels walk, and seraphs are the wardens,
Where every flower, brought safe through death's dark portal,
Becomes immortal."

BOWRING.

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# CHILDREN'S HEARTS AND HANDS.

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## CHAPTER I.

"PAPA," said my little Esther, one bright May morning, "I want to whisper to you a minute, and then you must let me run away, and don't ask me any thing till I come again. Will you, papa?"

There was no one else in the room, and I did not see much occasion for the whispering; but perhaps little children who read this will understand how it was easier for Esther to whisper than to speak aloud.



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So she put her little arms around my neck, and said,—

"If I come to your study to-day, I want you to hold out your golden sceptre to me, as King Ahasuerus did to *Queen* Esther."

Then away flew the little feet lightly and quietly out of the door and down the steps, her hat swinging around upon her arm, and, with one sparkling glance, half coquettish, half love, she was bounding off among the apple-blossoms and robin-red-breasts.

"Dear little child! God bless her!" I said, and then went off to my study, with a fresher heart and greater faith in God than if those little, loving, trusting arms had not just twined themselves about me. I could hear her singing among the birds, as if she were one of them, for half an hour; and then she came in to get ready

for school. And my heart caught the tune, and, in its joy, poured forth a song of praise to the dear Father of all, that He had bestowed such a gift upon me.

After school I waited for her, thinking she would come then; and presently I heard her stepping slowly along the hall, as if pondering very deeply the request she was going to make. She stopped a moment at the door, and I heard three very light little taps. So I took up a long, slender cane that stood by me, and, as she came in, held it towards her, smiling, and saying nothing.

As she walked slowly up and touched the end of my make-believe sceptre, I said, slowly and gravely,—

"What wilt thou, Queen Esther, and what is thy request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be performed."

And she answered, like the queen,—

"My petition and my request is, if I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it pleaseth the king to grant my petition and to perform my request, let the king listen now to that which I have to plead before him."

Then, throwing away the cane, and springing into my lap, she went on :—

"Papa, dear papa, you are so kind, I know you will help me, if I do not hope and want too much. It is a great deal for a little girl to do, but I keep thinking of it all the time. I can't get it out of my mind; and so I am come to tell you. Now, listen, papa, and please don't think I am foolish, and too young, and say, 'Wait till you are a woman, my dear, before you think of such things.' And please don't say any thing till I get through."

Then she nestled down in my bosom. Oh, if God's little children would only

come to Him in this same way, full of trust and clinging love, throwing the arms of faith confidently, beseechingly, about Him, pouring out their hearts' desires, surely He would *always* hear and answer, and fulfil His promise, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, believing, ye shall receive." It is precious, precious to an earthly parent to have a little one come so; and, as God's greatness and love are the fulness of what is only begun in us, so it must be more precious to Him,—this trust, this faith.

She was still a minute then, and I only stroked her little, soft curls, as she lay there quietly as at any other time.

"Papa."

"Well, darling?"

"You know that poor, poor foolish boy, almost an idiot, that runs all about the streets, and steals and swears and does

dreadfully wicked things, and all the boys plague and chase and frighten him so?"

"Yes, Esther."

"Well, papa, when I visited at Aunt Mary's last fall, Mr. Lockhold told us about a place where they take poor little children like him, and teach them to do right, and be useful, and all about Christ; and, if they never get very bright, they learn to love and trust Him, and to be good and quiet."

"Yes, dear,—the Asylum for Idiot Children."

"Yes: that's it. And I am sure this boy isn't as bad as some that are sent there; for when any of us treat him kindly, or give him any thing, he is always trying to do something for us in return; and he seems to know a good many things. And Mr. Lockhold said, when he told us about them, that some that are sent there can hardly

talk. And, papa, don't you think John could be sent there and learn to be good? Nobody teaches him any but bad things here; and his mother hates him as much as anybody."

"But, dear, his mother is poor, and can't afford to send him there."

"I know it; but——"

"But what?"

"Can't you send him, somehow, papa?"

"I am poor too, dear,—though not as she is; but I couldn't afford to send him there."

She kept still then a long time, nestling in my arms, only opening and shutting, her eyelids very slowly over her large earnest eyes. I knew she was thinking, and waited.

"Papa."

"Well?"

"If we should tell them how poor and

forsaken and neglected he is, wouldn't they take him without pay?"

"You can write and ask them."

"I, papa?"

"Yes, you."

"Oh, papa! I should be afraid; and I couldn't make them understand. You didn't *mean* that *I* should write, did you, papa? You are joking. You are laughing at me because I am such a little girl to"—— And the large, sweet eyes began to fill with tears.

"No, Esther; I am not joking, nor laughing at my little girl, nor thinking her too young to do this thing. I am delighted that my darling has thought of it, and hope it will prove that God has put the thought in her heart for the salvation of this poor boy. But, if you are in earnest, —if you really want to do something for him,—the thought is yours, the desire is

yours, and you should be willing to make some effort to carry it out. If we only do good when it is easy, and leave undone what costs us something, our love must be very weak. You mustn't be afraid. You can write and tell them about him, and that you want him to go to them and be taught about Jesus. You can tell them he is a grateful boy, and all about him that you know. Perhaps they take some poor children: I don't know. I will see what I can find about it; and, if they don't take him so, perhaps you can do something else to get him there."

"What, papa?"

"I don't know myself, dear; and we will try this way first."

"But, papa——"

"What, darling?"

"Won't you write?"

"No, dear: I would rather you did that."

"They wouldn't mind a little girl, papa."

"Esther, do you remember how Moses told the Lord that he was of a stammering tongue, when He was sending him to Pharaoh, and how God was angry with him for wanting some one else to go instead? Now, this is your work. God wants you to do it; and, if you love Him and pity poor John, you will try. Don't grieve Him, as Moses did, by trying to get another to do the work He has committed to you. If you are in earnest, you will write."

"I *am* in earnest, papa; but——" And the little tears began to come. I held her close in my arms, and stroked her soft curling hair, but neither of us said a word for a while. Then I said,—

"Esther, I want to say a little prayer with you, and then papa will be busy alone."

And we kneeled down, and asked God's

blessing on the thought He had given her; that He would help her "to do with might" this thing "that her hands had found to do," and to bless the poor boy, and to open the hearts of these good men to receive him. And afterwards I gave her my blessing, and she went down-stairs.

For the next three days Esther looked very sober. Sometimes I thought I saw traces of tears on her face; but I said nothing to her about them, nor about the letter. It would come, I felt sure; for I had faith in my little daughter. And so it did. One evening I sat on the piazza, with my back turned to the open glass door of the dining-room. I thought no one was at home but myself; but presently two little arms were around my neck, and a voice behind me said,—

"I have written it, papa; but I am afraid,—afraid it won't do."

And then she drew away one of the little hands, and brought it back with the letter. Then it went up to my head and played with the white hair, while the other lay still around my neck.

This is the letter:—

"DEAR GENTLEMEN:—

"There is a poor little idiot boy in our streets, that no one cares for. The boys plague him, and I have seen men do it too; and they chase him, and teach him to swear and to do bad things. No one teaches him any thing good; but, if we ever give him any thing, he tries to do something for us. So he is grateful, and, I am sure, could learn good things. Mr. Lockhold told me all about your house, and I wanted papa to send him to you; but he says he can't afford to, and that, if I would write to you, perhaps from pity you would take him. Please do, and Jesus will love you for it.

"Your little friend,

"ESTHER H——."

"Will it do, papa?"

"It will do very, very nicely, my darling; and I will send it to-morrow. I have

learned something about the asylum, and find it is partly a State institution. That means, that the State gives money to take care of some who cannot pay. This number is limited; and perhaps they cannot take John. But we will pray about it, and God will direct. Come and sit with me, darling." And we sat there a long time, that beautiful spring evening, and Esther repeated some hymns, and we sang one together that mingled with the little birds' sweet songs of praise, and went, we trust, up to the great white throne.

The next day I added this to the letter.—

"My little girl's statement is true. I leave it to make its own impression, and, with her, wait eagerly for your reply."

One week passed. Two weeks passed. Every day Esther asked, "Is there a letter, papa?" Each time I had to say, "No, dear; but I think it will come."

One day she said, "Papa, won't you write again?"

"We will wait another day or two, dear, and then I will, if nothing comes."

But that day it did come. I called over the stairs,—

"Esther, here is a letter for you."

"Oh, papa, papa! Will they take him?"

"I don't know, dear. It is directed to you. I haven't opened it."

She was with me in a moment, and opened the letter.

"Please you read it, papa."

"DEAR ESTHER:—

"God will bless the little heart that so early pities the unfortunate. May He make you grow into a *useful* Christian woman! I answer your letter myself, because I love little children and love to write to them. It was overlooked and unread until yesterday. God's providence was in this; because I couldn't have written so favorably before. Two days ago, one of our State patients died, leaving a vacancy in that depart-

ment, which poor John may fill, according to your wish and God's care. Your father will make out the necessary papers, as directed herein, and we will receive him with a welcome whenever he may come.

"E—— R——, *Superintendent.*"

I thought little Esther would dance about the room and clap her hands for joy as soon as I had finished the letter; but papa did not know the depths of that little heart, and he has learned since to feel that, in children as well as older people, it is God alone who can comprehend the whole.

"What is the matter, Esther?" I asked. "Don't you like the letter? Are you not happy? Are you not glad?"

The little eyes were full of tears again.

"Yes, papa; but——"

"Well, dear?"

"Papa, do you suppose God *did* put that thought into my heart? Do you suppose God has been in my heart?"

"I do, my darling. Indeed I do."

"How, papa?" and the little hands were clasped, as if in awe.

"By His Holy Spirit, dear."

"Is His Holy Spirit God Himself?"

"Yes, dear. He condescends to visit our hearts to influence us to all good and to teach us of Himself and of Christ."

"Will He stay with me, papa, and will He put other good thoughts in my heart?"

"If you will let Him, dear. If you will welcome Him, keep the doors of your heart wide open to Him, and not grieve Him away by *wrong* thoughts, He will *abide* with you, and help you always to be good, more and more and more."

"Papa, if He is willing to abide with me, He must be willing to abide with any one."

"Yes, dear."

"With poor John, papa?"

"Yes, indeed,—with poor John."

"How *can* He be with *every one*, papa?"

I answered as God had answered me long, long before, when I had asked Him the same question:—

"Look at the sunlight, Esther. It is the spirit of the sun. It penetrates and abides with every thing and every creature, unless we choose to shut it out. It dwells with every tree and leaf and flower, making them grow and bud and blossom. Without it, all would die. Looking down, the sun sees them all, and shines for all. Looking up, they all can see the sun. Yet, if you should tell one little flower this truth, it would wonder how the *same* sunlight could warm a whole world of flowers. God is the sun of our souls. His Holy Spirit is the omnipotent sunlight by which alone we can live."

Then we kneeled down again, where, a short time before, our petition had gone up,

and thanked our loving Father that He had heard us and condescended to allow us to be the means of doing this poor boy good. We prayed that he might learn of Jesus, and love the right and the good, and that the Blessed Spirit would rest upon and abide with both these children,—the little one so precious to me and upon whom He had bestowed the great gift of intellect, and upon the one less blessed, but still beloved.

"When can he go, papa?"

"I don't know, dear. I will see about it to-morrow. He must have some decent clothes, and we must get his mother's consent. Then the papers must be made out and signed, and some one found to take him there."

"Now, then, papa, I will go and tell mamma all about it;" for "mamma" had not been in council at all,—at Esther's request, as she had wanted her to know

nothing about it till all was arranged. And she bounded off with the glee and sparkle which I had expected to see at first.

John's mother was "glad enough to be rid of him," she said. Other matters were soon arranged, and all that remained was to see him properly clothed. Esther went about among her young friends, and they soon collected a sufficient wardrobe. Then a good Irishwoman took him in hand, and he came from her looking much improved, inasmuch as he was clean. For my little readers must know that an idiot, if left to his own care, is invariably uncleanly; and poor John had afforded a deplorable example of this fact.

In a few days more, he was safe in his new home, under the charge of those who knew how to care for him and would love him for Christ's sake. Yes, even love him,—a poor, disgusting, untaught idiot,

—with the same kind of love that Christ gave the world; because he was "one of God's creatures."

And now my little Esther's share in his story is told. The poor, forsaken, untidy, persecuted boy had found a shelter, food, clothing, kind friends, and care, through her love and pity.

And the consequence of this deed of love I will go on to tell you; because it was the *result* of what she did,—of what she did by *cherishing* a thought which God put within her heart. If she had thrown it aside, and said, "I am too young; I can't," or if, while she longed to do it, she had yielded to her natural shrinking from the effort, John might have lived and died the same poor, degraded object that we found him. Instead of that fate, however, something far better came to him, in God's kind providence.

## CHAPTER II.

JOHN'S teachers found him much less idiotic than many of the children given to their care: still, he was an idiot, if not in the worst, yet apparently in every sense of the word; and, moreover, he had been utterly neglected and untaught for ten or eleven years,—which made it much more difficult to rouse the little intellect he had, than if his education had commenced at an earlier age. In some ways he showed signs of improvement, and, as Esther had written, he was sensible of kindness and

naturally grateful, trying to do little things for those who gave him his food or in other ways served him,—often even taking things from others to give to those taking care of him. And it was long before he could be made to understand that this was wrong.

But he was still very careless in his habits, and no means used or words spoken seemed able to create the faintest sense of neatness. To you or me looking on, it would have seemed a hopeless task; and I fear our charity would have been overcome by our disgust. But the patience of these kind instructors is, after God, their greatest strength; and, besides, they know from experience that sometimes, when there seems no hope, a gleam of light will come to these poor beings, or an unsuspected chord is accidentally touched, opening a clear and unobstructed passage into the mind and

heart and up to God. Such a chord there was in John; and I will tell you how it was found and played upon, until the poor, repulsive idiot was transformed into a pure and beautiful spirit, delighting in the service of God.

One day a little girl of thirteen or fourteen years came with her parents to visit the asylum, She was one in whom God's grace dwelt,—not a perfect child, as you will see, but one whom he was teaching, and who listened to his Holy Spirit in her soul. Every day she thought of him; and a kindness done or a sweet word spoken to one of his creatures was her offering of love. God saw that she loved him with her sweet child's heart, and he came and dwelt with her, as I have said. See Jesus' words in John xiv. 23:—"If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will

come unto him, and make our abode with him."

The morning that she came, she had prayed that she might do some good to at least one of the poor idiots whom she was going to see. And when she prayed, she meant to try; for the Holy Spirit had taught her it was mockery to pray for God's help and then hold back from the work given. So, when she saw John standing in a corner, staring at them all, and grinning and making faces, she whispered to one of the teachers,—

"Can I go and speak to that boy?"

"Certainly, my child."

So, although modest and shrinking, and even trembling a little, she walked up to John and gave him an orange, and, in a very low tone, so that no one else could hear, she said,—

"What is your name?"

"John."

"John, do you love God?"

There was no answer but a stare.

"Do you know who God is?"

"No."

"He is your friend. He is your Father. He loves you, and wants you to love him. Won't you love him?"

"Can't."

"Oh, yes, you can, John. Don't you love any one?"

"She," (pointing to a servant;) "she give me crackers; you give me this."

"Yes; you love any one who gives you what you want. Now, God gives you all you have, and will give you all you need."

"Will he?"

"Yes."

"Where does he live?"

"Up there in the blue sky."

"Can't."

"Yes, he can. That is his home; and he looks down upon you all the time, and can see you wherever you are. And he loves you; for he made you."

"Me?"

"Yes: it was God who made you."

John stretched out both his hands, and turned them round and round. Then he looked at his feet; then he passed his hands over his face, feeling each feature, and then through his hair. Then he shook his head, made a grimace, and, saying, "I hate Him!" ran away.

Fannie felt discouraged indeed. Her heart went down, down, and her eyes filled with tears, as she thought, "Is this all I can do? Oh, I ought not to have expected to do any thing;" and then she murmured a little prayer,—"Father, bless him! Holy Spirit, teach him!"

Ten minutes after, when Fannie and her

friends were in another part of the building, she saw John standing in a doorway, staring at them all. He held one hand behind him; and presently, when he saw Fannie looking at him, he beckoned her with the other, and called,—

"Come here, you."

Fannie could not help smiling at this; but in a moment she smiled from a different cause,—a sweeter smile. He held a rose in the hidden hand, which he drew from behind him and stretched towards her.

"Pretty?"

"It is beautiful," said Fannie.

"Beau-ti-ful!" said John. 'It's for you."

"For me! Thank you, John. I shall keep it a——"

She was going to say "a long while;" but he started to run away, and she called,—

"Wait a minute, John: I want to speak to you."

He turned round and grinned.

"I do, John. Come back."

John stood still: so she went to him in the little passage-way.

"John, God made the beautiful flower, and he made it for you and for me, because he loves to make us happy. Can't you love him for giving us the pretty flower?"

"Did God make it?"

"Yes."

"And all the flowers,—the beautiful flowers?"

"Yes."

"Can't," said John, with a shake of the head, and an incredulous grin.

"Why not, John?"

"I'm bad; that's beau-ti-ful."

"Now, John, let me tell you something,"

said Fannie. "The beautiful rose loves God: that is why it is beautiful. Now, if you will love God, he will make you more beautiful than any flower."

"Me?"

"Yes, you; and you will go to see him, and be a flower in his garden."

"Tell me again."

Fannie repeated what she had said. John looked himself all over, as he had done before.

"Will he?" asked he.

"Yes, he will. Take the rose and look at it. See how beautiful it is. Look at the little yellow things down there, and the bright pink leaves. You will be more beautiful. You will be God's own flower, if you love him."

John took the flower, turning it over and over, smelling it, and presently seemed to forget that Fannie was there. She lifted

up another little prayer, that God would bless him, and turned to go away. John said, "It's yours: take it. I'll try."

"Try to love him?"

"To be his flower."

"John, would you like a rose-bush of your own?"

"Yes."

"Will you take good care of it if I send you one?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will send you one from my own little garden, if papa is willing; and you must always think you will be like it when you die and go to God. Good-by."

The evening of the next day, Fannie came to her father, bringing in her hand the choicest of her roses, and said,—

"Papa, I want to send this to John. May I?"

"What John?"

"One of the idiots."

"My dear child, what would he do with it?"

"He said he would take good care of it."

"Did you promise it to him?"

"I said if you were willing."

"You were right there. But I am not willing. Go put it back in your garden. It is a choice rose, that I value very much; and it would perish in no time if you gave it to him. Run away, little goosie, and put it where you found it."

Fannie did run, to hide her choking, choking tears. She put the rose back, and then went to her room and had a long cry. She didn't pray; she didn't ask God's comfort; but she gave way to her disappointment, at first feeling angry with her papa, saying to herself that he didn't care to have her do any good, and wouldn't help her, and then that God didn't love her

enough to let her do any thing for Him. These were naughty thoughts, and made her very unhappy. By-and-by her father called,—

"Fannie, will you go to ride?"

"No, papa."

"Not go to ride?"

"No, thank you, papa."

"Why, what's the matter, little bird?" said papa, coming up-stairs.

"Nothing, papa."

"Why, what red eyes! What is it, my darling? The rose,—is that it? Why, little one, did you care so much?"

Fannie said, "Yes," and looked away.

"But tell me, darling: what made you want to send it to him? Perhaps I was wrong in saying 'no' so quickly; but it seemed a very strange thing to do. If it is the boy you talked to, they told me he was very stupid, that they could teach him

very slowly, and that the only promising thing about him was that he was always grateful for a kindness. Now, if he had the flower, he surely would not have wit enough to take care of it."

"Papa, I have been naughty. I have had naughty thoughts about you, and about God, since you said he couldn't have the rose. I ought to have told you all about it. John wasn't stupid with me: he was full of love for the flower, and seemed to catch at the idea of being a flower in God's garden, as I told him he could, and said he would try. So I promised him the rose; and he seemed so glad and bright about it that I am sure he would take care of it. And I thought it would do him good; for it was the only way he would hear about God; and he said he hated him, till I told him this, and then his face brightened, and he seemed so glad."

"This certainly does make a difference, dear. It may be that this will prove the link between his poor benighted intellect and God. Sometimes they catch at a thing like this, when no other will rouse them. We were both wrong, dear. I was too hasty, and you were too quickly grieved. Let us come down into the garden together and see what is there. I would rather you sent him a less choice flower at first; and then, if it proves that this is a bright spot in his poor mind, we will send him better ones by-and-by."

## CHAPTER III.

FROM the time that Fannie left the asylum, till the rose arrived, John was running to the windows at every possible opportunity. One of the teachers asked him what he was looking for.

"My rose."

"What rose, John?"

"She's going to send it.'

"Who?"

"She 't' was here."

"Did she promise you one?"

"Yes; and I'm going to be a rose."

The teacher, not understanding what he meant, smiled.

"What makes you think so?"

"She said God made the rose, and if I'll love him he'll make me a rose in his garden; and a rose is beau-ti-ful." And his face lighted up, and the teacher, touched and surprised by the child's emotion, met him with ever ready sympathy, and replied,—

"Yes, John; if you love him, he will. God will make all those who love him very beautiful; and if you like best to be his flower, he will make you one, I am sure."

The next day the rose came; and John was full of delight. It had several blossoms and buds, that would keep it in flower a long time. And he sat down and held the pot in his hands, smelling and caressing them, till one of the teachers called him

away to attend to some of the daily duties which all are made regularly to perform. They gave him a nice sunny window for his rose; and, although at first he did indeed not know how to take care of it, when one of the teachers told him what it needed, he listened with perfect understanding, and from that time it flourished as finely as Fannie's papa could wish. This was his one bright and happy spot. About every thing else he was stupid and melancholy. He could not learn to read. He could do no work without being directly overlooked. He was awkward and clumsy. Often he would not answer when spoken to; and, except in connection with his rose, he seemed unable to receive any idea about God. But when he went to that, he was entirely changed. His face lighted up, full of love and animation; he would take a little stick and loosen the earth about the

roots, so carefully that he never injured them or rubbed the bark; he would bring water without spilling a drop. And one day, when a teacher showed him that the pot was dirty and the leaves dusty, and how they could be cleaned, he took a little cloth, and washed every speck of mould from the pot, and sprinkled the leaves till they were bright and perfect. If one became yellow, he picked it off directly; and when it rained he often took it out to have it well wetted. When told about God in connection with his rose, he would always say,—

"He lives in the blue sky. I shall go there and be *his* rose."

One day a teacher said to him,—

"John, if you take good care of your flowers here, perhaps God will let you water his flowers in heaven."

This was a delightful idea to him; and

he often spoke of it afterwards. And now he began to grow really careful about his person; for when his teacher told him how to make his flower clean and pure, he told him, too, that *he* must try to be so now, if he was going to be one of them. And from that time he did try; and, with careful training, and frequent repetition of the same lessons, there was, in time, no more tidy inmate of the asylum.

"God's flowers must be clean," he was often heard to say; and he would look from the plant to himself again and again, and, if he saw his boots were muddy or his hands not clean, he would hurry away and make himself perfectly neat. Sometimes, holding the pot in his hands, he would talk to it:—

"Beautiful rose, God made you. I love you. I shall be his rose in heaven. You will go there too, and be more beau-

tiful than you are now; and I will water you there."

One day Fannie's father said to her,—

"I think we must go to see how John gets on with his rose."

And when they arrived, and saw it looking so finely, and saw John's love for it, and how improved he was, and learned all that I have told you, you may imagine their joy, and how Fannie's heart was full of thanksgiving. He was delighted to see her, and brought her several little things that he valued, and then, after keeping still some time, he picked a rose and gave it to her, saying,—

"It is the first John has picked. John doesn't love to pick them, but for you."

Fannie's father was now as much interested as she, and, before leaving, they obtained permission to send him two or three more plants, and for Fannie to come and

teach him what each one needed. This delighted him exceedingly, and he clapped his hands, and said,—

"So glad! So glad!"

And Fannie was glad too, and her face grew very, very bright. John looked at her as one would at an angel very far away, and said,—

"I love you." And presently,—

"Have you seen God?"

And when they were going, he said,—

"Don't go."

But Fannie told him she was going that she might bring him flowers; and then he said,—

"Yes; come again, with more flowers."

The next day, when she brought them, —a heliotrope, a geranium, and another rose,—he asked,—

"Did you bring them from God's garden?"

"Oh, no," said Fannie: "they came from

my own little garden. God's flower-garden is not in this world. You and I will neither of us see it till we die and go to him in the blue sky." And he seemed satisfied, and said,—

"We shall go there by-and by."

Time went on, and with it his love for God, Fannie, and the flowers increased. Whatever he learned was from his flowers. His teachers and Fannie would read the Bible to him while working over them, and always try to explain it by them; and then he always listened and learned. But away from them he was the same poor stupid John as of old. Fannie taught him to cut slips, and how to make them grow, often bringing him choice ones from her father's plants. And under his hand they always flourished; not one failed.

And so the winter passed away, and John increased his little stock many fold.

They gave him a nice flower-stand; and this, placed in a pleasant window, was the sweetest, prettiest spot in the whole asylum, and the delight of all. It was wonderful to see his skill. He knew much more than he was ever taught. It came to him as if by inspiration. He would prune and trim the little bushes into perfect health and shape, and much according to his own idea. Every leaf was perfect; not an insect was to be seen, not one defective flower. God seemed to bless them especially for him. And his taste in arranging them was as wonderful as his skill in cultivating them.

And when the summer came, he was given a little spot of land, and told to bring his plants out-doors, that they might have the rain and warmth. The reason of this he was easily made to understand; but when they gave him little seeds to plant, he was only puzzled, and could not com-

prehend that putting them in the warm earth would cause them to be flowers by-and-by. But he was told to watch, and so obeyed, and day after day worked in his little bed, and was often seen looking at the places with a half-incredulous, half-curious expression; and sometimes he would lie down at full length and put his ear over the spot where the seeds lay hidden. What do you suppose he was thinking then? That he could hear them talking about what they would be, or tell how soon they would appear? Perhaps some deeper, sweeter thought than you or I could think, and, unknown by us and forgotten by him, is yet not lost, because his guardian angel has recorded it.

One morning, after a heavy, warm rain, he found the first green leaves from the seeds; and his exclamation was, "They are peeping! they are peeping!" and he

danced with joy. But as he found afterwards how slowly they grew, he was a little disappointed. Then he became more satisfied, and settled down into a sweet, quiet contentment in tending them. And when the flowers came, his joy was tranquil, and his love was like a mother's for a child.

The summer wore away, and, with careful teaching, he had learned much and easily about the different plants, their names, and how they should be placed and tended to grow to best advantage. And all he cared for throve as wonderfully as those he had at first in-doors, and his bed was very, very beautiful. He talked to them, and loved God and understood and prayed to him by them, and altogether lived in them. Always at night he slept with one sweet flower in his hand.

He touched his plants and picked and held the flowers with the utmost gentleness.

By this he was taught a precious lesson, that drew him near to God and showed him more clearly how he could rest in him. When he first went to the asylum, he had been occasionally very passionate and violent. A teacher said to him, one day,—

"John, you always touch your flowers gently."

He smiled.

"And Jesus always touches your heart gently, because it is his tender flower. Oh, he would not, would not touch it roughly, any more than you would be rough with one of your little flowers, not even if it did not grow just right. Think! When you find a plant grown crooked, how tenderly you turn it back! And so it is with him. Even when you grieve him, he is never rough with you, but always tender. If you will learn to read his life,

you will see how he was always gentle; and he is just so now,—full of love and tenderness and patience to you, as you are to your flowers. But there is one thing that grieves him in you, one fault that you must put away and overcome,—your temper, John. Remember that all those who love him are his flowers; and when you get angry, and say bad words, and throw things at people, you are not only getting yourself out of order, but you are hurting Jesus' other flowers, touching them roughly. Put away your temper, John. Be always gentle, like Jesus, and remember, when you are angry with another person, your roughness hurts their hearts,—Jesus' flowers,—and grieves the Master who is so gentle and patient with you."

The substance of this lesson was often repeated, and made as plain as possible to John's poor, feeble mind; and at last he

grasped it fully, and thenceforth he was perfectly kind in word and deed to all about him, and often said,—

"John, never hurt Jesus' flowers. Touch them gently."

And his gentle way of speaking every word, of doing every deed, was wonderful and beautiful. And then he began to teach what he had learned. One day he was seen going to a workman who was scolding a boy under him, and, laying his hand on the man's arm, he said,—

"He is Jesus' flower. Your rough words hurt his heart, and that hurts Jesus."

And so, whenever he heard harsh words, he interposed, and often saved much bitterness and comforted many aching hearts.

Thus by his flowers he learned all he had of good. Through them alone he comprehended, in his small degree, the love of God, and gave his love to him.

By them he learned to love his fellow-men, to keep himself nice, to be "gentle unto all."

But, while I tell you all these things about poor John, you must remember he was still an idiot. This one bright, lovely spot God opened in his mind, making a passage to his heart by which he received and gave the Love that is Life. But otherwise he was unaroused,—not understanding, not even noticing, other things. So that his teachers let him rest in this one joy, and ceased to trouble him with what he could not learn.

## CHAPTER IV.

TWO, three, four, years passed away. Occasionally I had letters in answer to my inquiries about John, and from them I have gathered what I have told you of his progress. Now, I was informed, he had become a perfect florist,—even scientific. Nothing he was taught about botany had seemed beyond his comprehension; and, finding it was so, his teachers had given him in this branch a thorough education. He had never learned to read; and so all instruction came by word of

mouth. But every thing pertaining to his precious flowers, that was told or read to him, he drank in with a thirsty soul. I did not see him during all this time; but at the end of the fourth year, Esther and her mamma and I, travelling near the asylum, made it a point of great interest to go and see the boy. I had not heard of him for the last six months; and so we were surprised to find him gone. It seemed that Fannie's father came one day and offered him the place of gardener, with full wages, after three months under the old gardener, who was then to leave.

"You had better drive over there, sir," said the kind superintendent. "It is only three miles; and they will be delighted to see you, especially as you are interested in John. They are very proud of him; and well they may be,—though a stranger might wonder at my saying so."

We concluded to go, and, after a charming drive, found ourselves at the door of a beautiful old cottage, the rustic posts and piazzas all covered with lovely vines. In front was a wide, sloping lawn, and a beautiful view of the sea. We rang, and soon were received by Fannie's papa. When he heard our errand, he was very cordial, and, noticing Esther, sent for Fannie, and then we all went into the garden. It was a lovely spot, very rich in shrubs and flowers and pretty walks and rustic seats. As we went on, the girls ran off to John, whom they saw in the distance, while the papas walked more slowly, and talked.

"Yes, sir," said Fannie's papa,—"yes, sir, he is a wonder, and a Christian, sir, if there ever was one. Gentle as a lamb; kind to every creature on God's earth. In all his work he never treads upon a worm, or hurts an insect, unless they destroy the

flowers; and then he says they are God's enemies, and fights them with a zeal. Ah, sir! I have watched him from the first, and I will say again, he is a wonder. Every bit of heart and mind that God has given him is in perfect order for his Lord. And it is all through his flowers, sir,—all through his flowers."

"And your little daughter's love," I said.

"Yes, yes," he said, hastily; "but she has full intellect, and they both are God's jewels. Two beautiful lives,—two beautiful lives!"

I saw John, and talked with him a little; but in this way I could not reach him much.

"Ah, sir!" said Fannie's papa, afterwards, "you should see him working among the flowers, and hear him talk to them as if they were his children. You cannot understand it unless you happen here and watch him."

Still, I was glad I had seen him and found him happy, prosperous, provided with a good home and kind friends. I felt that the work was done, perfected; and it was enough. I was quite satisfied, and turned to go away, with thankful heart that the love of two little girls had saved this boy.

"Stay! you must have some flowers," said our kind host. "John, make some choice bouquets, and bring them in."

Esther ran to me and put her hand in mine and pressed it tightly. That told me that her heart was full.

"Well, Esther," I said, "it is good to see this boy, that used to be so wretched, all full of love and life and happiness, isn't it?"

Fannie's papa exclaimed, "Esther? Esther? Why, the little girl who sent John here was Esther: wasn't it, Fannie? Wasn't that the name? Is this the child?" he said, turning to me.

I smiled, and said, "It is."

He held her head upturned in his hand a moment, gazed in her eyes, and, saying, "I am honoured in my guests to-day," turned and led the way back into the house. Afterwards he said,—

"Fannie's mamma was not at liberty when you first came. I think she will be waiting for you now."

As we approached the house, she stood on the piazza. Her husband introduced us, and then they urged us to remain and be their guests. This we could not do, but promised a week after to come and pass a day. Then we had lunch; and, while sitting at the table, John brought in three bouquets. Two of them were made alike, of various flowers, arranged with perfect taste and grace,—the dark colours on one side, and shaded off with lighter and lighter ones, until the other side was

white, and lovely little sprays of green drooped here and there over the whole. No one colour offended another; each was placed where it showed to best advantage; and, with all this perfectness, he had not been ten minutes in arranging them. Then there was a third, made only of beautiful roses and sweet heliotrope, separated by perfect green leaves. He brought them in a little rustic basket he himself had made of twigs, most gracefully formed; and when he gave them to us, he said,—

"Hold them very tenderly. God made them. Learn to be like them, fragrant with his love."

Fannie told Esther, some time afterwards, that he never gave flowers away without some word like this.

It was really hard to go away. Our new friends were so warm, and every thing so beautiful about us, we could have re-

mained with great pleasure. But we had other plans, which we could not change, and so took leave.

When we were in our carriage again, all by ourselves, Esther said no word, but turned her head away and wept. Were they not holy tears? and did not God treasure them as gushing from a heart thrilling with joy and gratitude and praise? He had shown her the perfect fruit of her earnest, active love, and the reward was a thousandfold. Therefore her heart flowed over. He does not always deem it well to do this for those who serve him just as earnestly. But be patient and have faith, all ye who serve the Lord and his poor children in this world, and in time you too will see the perfect end of all you do for him and them. Only be sure you do your work with pure and earnest hearts.

By-and-by Esther put her hand in mine,

and said, "Isn't it beautiful, papa,—too beautiful! Can it be true?"

A week after, we returned. We had a charming day, and then left Esther, for another week. Fannie's papa had said, "We must have your child. We must have her. Are they not sisters? Is there not a peculiar bond between them? Ah, you must leave her with us for a little. They should know and love each other."

So she stayed; and she and Fannie did indeed love one another, and had seven joyful days. Every morning they went fresh and early to the garden and watched John with his flowers. And once, when he did not know that they were near, they heard him talking to them, and kept very still, and listened for some time. He was training some sweet peas.

"There, there, little one," he said; "don't turn about that way. What made you

leave the place I gave you last night? Was it the beautiful shower that came while I was asleep? Did it beat you down? Oh, it only meant you kindness; and you must not grieve. You will be brighter all the day for the good rain. Now put your fingers there, and there, and hold on tight, and you will be my prettiest bush of peas in the whole garden, soon. There! Good-by, sweets. I'll come back by-and-by. Now, you little pet rose, what worries you? I give you every care, and yet you droop. This will not do. You do not blossom as you did. I think there's something bothers you. I think I'll take you up and see. So now, little one. I'll be gentle: don't you fear. I'll just ease you out." And, saying so, he dug about the pot, and took it up; and then, after prying a little between the pot and the earth, and knocking it two or three times, he turned it gently over in

his hand, and so held it that the earth was not broken and the roots were scarcely exposed. He held it so, quite still, a moment, and then turned it over, looking all about it; and then, seeing a small, round hole, he said, "Ah, that's the trouble." Then he laid it down out of his hand very softly, with the hole on one side, and stood watching. Presently an ugly worm came creeping out; he was timid at first, and then, finding no harm, a little curious to see what all this commotion was about; and finally he came out entirely. When he was fairly exposed, John knocked him with somewhat less of gentleness than he had shown before, and killed him with one blow, and then, taking up the rose again, began caressing it.

"My poor little floweret, my poor sweet rose, no wonder you drooped; no wonder your blossoms were less full. Poor little

thing! how you wanted to tell me, and old stupid John could not hear your sweet talk. Ah! when we get to heaven, Jesus will teach me how to talk with you; but no one knows how to do it here. Poor little thing! There! you will hardly know that I have moved you; only the old worm is gone, and in a little while you will feel quite well again, I hope. Bless your little hearts," he said to some forget-me-nots, "how bright you look! The shower did you good. Wasn't it cool and nice? And now the sun is so bright. Beautiful rain and sunshine Jesus sends us: doesn't he?"

And so on and on, from one to another, with a word to each. It was all real to him. He did not doubt that his flowers understood each word. And his face was so bright and beaming, and his step so glad, as he went from one flower to another

with his gentle words, that any one would know that his heart was as happy and true as any that throbbed in the bright sunshine of that morning. Presently he went farther on, and out of hearing, and the girls left the little rustic seat and followed him. Fannie asked him about some plants of hers, and then said,—

"Can you go with us to the woods to-day? My friend and I are going to get twin-flowers; and I will show you what I want for my fern-mound."

John said he had time; and Fannie continued:—

"Well, then, we had better go as early as we can; for it will be very warm by noon. Come, Esther, let's run to breakfast; and then for the nicest of times in the woods,—the cool green woods!"

At half-past eight they were ready to start. John carried a tin flower-box,

which was nicely arranged for holding roots or flowers, and Fannie and Esther, with their stout shoes and broad hats, were well arrayed for a walk of three or four miles, counting the way back. The first part of the way was not much in the shade; but after a half-mile they began to get into the woods, and shortly after that, going down a little hill and up another, they found themselves in the deep woods. Oh, how beautiful it was! The cool shade, and sweet, fresh perfume of the pines which made half the forest, their smooth brown leaves carpeting the narrow footpath; the soft green moss on each side, and the pretty partridge-vines, with their red berries; the various delicate ferns scattered everywhere; and now and then beds of the trailing myrtle, with its beautiful white flowers just tinted with pink. Then the songs of the birds, and above and

beyond all the sweet note of the wood-thrush, which rang out continuously, with its thrilling clearness and beauty.

"Oh, Esther! Esther! isn't it lovely here? Wouldn't it be beautiful to live out in the woods? I often think, in summer, if I could only sleep out-doors in some of the warm nights, and have the bright stars look down in my face, and the little breezes come to make me cool, and then to wake in the morning at three or four o'clock and hear the birds all singing in the rich flood of song they pour out then, and lie and listen and feast upon it! I hardly ever wake to hear it, sleeping in the house; and it seems so dull to be covered with a great thick roof, that shuts out all these beautiful things."

"It certainly is the most beautiful time of day," said Esther. "Papa says that the exquisite freshness and calm and peace

of that hour is like something of heaven come down to us,—as if it had come and touched the earth, leaving a part of itself to purify and strengthen it to meet the heat and burden of another weary day. I think you love all these things just as papa and I do. How I wish he were here now!"

So they chatted and walked on, picking here and there little gems of flowers or ferns, forgetting almost every thing, only inhaling in soul and body the sweet life about them. They had gone half a mile, perhaps, when Fannie, looking suddenly about, exclaimed,—

"Why, where is John?" Then, in a moment, she added,—

"Hush, Esther: don't call. I think I know where he is. He always prays when he comes out here. He will come back in a minute, I guess. There; this is the little path that leads to the place where

the twin-flowers grow. I'll leave my cape right here as we turn in, and then he will know when he comes. Now, then, I will show you the prettiest little flowers, I think, you ever saw. I am quite sure they are in bloom. They always are, the very last of June. To think that you don't know them!"

"I do now! I do now!" exclaimed Esther. "Here they are. There are just a few on the side of the path. You passed right by. Oh, they *are* beautiful!—and so very fragrant! Oh, Fannie," she said, holding some up and smelling them, "they are more delicate than any flower I ever saw; and not one without its mate,—not one! How singular! How beautiful!"

"Yes, they are lovely: such dear little things! I knew you would like them. But they grow thicker a little farther on: there is a great bed of them. I am so

glad you think they are more beautiful than any other flowers; for I do, and I have said so much about them. Come; it is beautiful just over there."

When they had gone a few steps, and Esther was looking at the flowers she had gathered, Fannie checked her with her hand, and then pointed with her finger to a space very clear of all undergrowth,— where the large bed of flowers grew, Esther thought, though she was too far to see distinctly. In front of it John was kneeling, one hand holding flowers, and the other raised above his head. Fannie and Esther went back a little way, and waited out of sight. Presently John called,—

"Miss Fannie, Miss Fannie. Here are lots of flowers."

In a moment they joined him. It was very beautiful. The clear space was entirely shaded by thick branches above,

and below was an immense bed of small, dark-green leaves, making a thick, close carpet, dotted all over with the most delicate pink bells. Each stem had two flowers: not one failed in this suggestion of perfect, constant love. The fragrance was exquisite and delicate, perfectly in harmony with the tender beauty of the flower; and Fannie and Esther were in raptures of delight. Indeed, Fannie, who had feared some degree of disappointment in Esther's appreciation of her pet flowers, because she had praised them to such extreme, was quite satisfied with her enthusiasm. They gathered all they could provide with room in the cool box; and then, while John went off a little distance to collect some ferns and other plants, they sat down on a large stone to rest.

"Isn't it beautiful," said Esther, "that, when these flowers are so delicate in form

and colour and fragrance, and we admire them so much, they do not make us love other flowers any less? Papa says no two flowers can be compared: we must rest in saying each is beautiful. These are the beauty of your woods. Ours is so different,—more of a glory. You should see our grove of rhododendrons!"

"Grove of rhododendrons!" exclaimed Fannie. "What do you mean? A grove?—a whole grove?"

"Yes," said Esther: "did you never hear of it? They grow luxuriantly about four miles from where we live. There is only one other place in New England where they grow wild,—in Maine, I believe."

"Well, indeed, I am amazed," said Fannie. "I thought they belonged to the tropics, and that that is the reason it is so difficult to make them thrive with us. We had one root of it, but it only blos-

somed two years, and died in two or three more."

"Well, you should see ours," said Esther. "Four or five miles from our house there is a thick wood, and after leaving the road and walking about five minutes through a little, rough footpath, we come to a place, damp and very shady, where it grows in great masses, and five or six feet high. It is superb, and worth any amount of trouble taken to see it. I do hope you will come some time when it is in bloom."

"Thank you," said Fannie: "it would be very pleasant. I should be sure to bring some away with me. Can it be transplanted?"

"A great deal has been carried away," said Esther; "but there has been so little success in making it grow, that people only take the blossom now. I suppose it needs just such a dark, damp place, and

peculiar soil; and that people don't always understand. But it is superb as it grows in the woods; and papa has made some roots grow nicely in a little spot near our garden."

"I should think the little ravine behind our house, where the brook runs, would do," said Fannie. "It is deep and damp and shady."

"I should think it might," said Esther. "Yes, I do believe it is the very place. You must try it some time, and John would be sure to succeed with it. But these dear little flowers! they are as lovely as —oh, what shall I say? They are so delicate, so pure! they look so loving and gentle, as if they would tell us the sweetest lessons from the spirit-land. Oh, Fannie! what are they like? or what could be like them in all the world?"

"Ask John," said Fannie, as he appeared with his hands full of choice ferns.

"John, what are these flowers like?"

"Nothing here; something in heaven. They would tell us if we could understand. But we are so dull. By-and-by we shall know."

"I think I know what they are like, even in this world," said Fannie. "For two Sundays past, one of the loveliest little girls I ever saw has been in Sunday-class; and last Sunday she told me she is one of twins, and that her little sister is ill. If the little sister is as lovely as she, they may well take this flower as the emblem of their sweet double life. This afternoon, Esther, if you are not too tired, I should like to go to see these little beauties and judge if they are worthy such a tribute. We will take some flowers with us, and I believe we shall find them as beautiful as our little pink bells. Won't that be pleasant? Will you go?"

"Yes, indeed," said Esther.

"I am so fond of little children," Fannie went on. "I sometimes have all that I can get together for an afternoon. In summer we have grand times out-of-doors; and in winter, all sorts of games and nice times in the house. And these dear little Sunday-scholars of mine, Esther, you have no idea how I love them. I did not tell you before that I have a class: did I? It is only this summer; and at first I disliked to leave the one where I was a scholar; but I do love my little ones so dearly now! I suppose, of course, that you go to Sunday-school, Esther?"

"Oh, yes, indeed I do," said Esther; "and we have such pleasant times. I don't believe there ever was a better Sunday-school. All the children love so to go. I believe they all think Sunday the pleasantest day of the week. We have such

sweet, lively music, and such a dear superintendent, who loves all the children; and such pleasant teachers. Everybody goes, young and old; and a year ago we gave up the afternoon sermon, so that we could have a better time for this, and not think it was one thing too much for Sunday, and hurry through to get time for dinner, or lunch, or whatever one had. Everybody likes it; and we all feel as if we belonged to each other; and the ladies want all the little girls that are old enough, to go to the sewing-circle, and we have a corner to ourselves, and one of our teachers reads us pretty stories. You don't know how nice it is. It wasn't always so, I assure you. I know the sweetness by contrast. It is all since Mr. Blake was the superintendent. Before that, we had old Mr. Dennet. I suppose he is good; but he used to poke round the school and

make it so forlorn just to look at him, and never spoke to one of us. All he said was to open the school and close it, and take the numbers of the scholars, and I don't know what else. At last he resigned; and then we had new life. Mr. Blake knows just what the children like, and gives them sweet music, and teaches them to sing, and comes into the classes and talks in the very sweetest way, telling us how to be good and love Jesus, and all sorts of nice things to do to please Him, that we could never think of. Oh, I can't tell you half about him; but he knows us all, every little child in the school; and he makes the older people like him just as well. Now our good minister comes, and everybody comes, and all are so happy. Don't you think you would like it, Fannie? Some time you must come and see."

"Thank you," said Fannie. "I shou d

like to, very much, and I am sure it must be charming. It is what I often long for; because in our own we have so much less time than I like. Now, then, we must go from our sweet flowers. It is hard to leave them: isn't it? But we shall find our morning gone, and our walk a hot one, if we stay here much longer."

As they turned to go away, they heard John say, "Good-by, sweet ones: we shall try to come again."

Another half-hour, through a path even more beautiful than the one by which they came, brought them to the end of the woods, and then a little heat and fatigue had to be endured in the less shady road before they reached home; but the walk was one of unalloyed pleasure, and never forgotten in any of its details by my sweet Esther.

## CHAPTER V.

IN the cool of the afternoon, when the unfailing, delicious sea-breeze came, they started for their visit to the little twins. Fannie took some flowers beautifully arranged in a small glass dish; and the first sparkle of delight in the little scholar's eyes, as she opened the door, was so bright and clear and easily interpreted as it flashed back and forth from Fannie's face to her hands, that it quite satisfied the youthful teacher that the welcome given both to herself and the flowers was all she could have

desired. Esther was delighted with the child; the clear, sweet face, the exquisite complexion, the regular features and sunny curls, flashed before her for one instant like a lovely picture, while they were welcomed with a childish grace; and then she felt as if a little sunbeam were vanishing before them, as she ran almost out of sight in eagerness to lead them to "mamma." Mamma was soon made to understand that this was the Sabbath-school teacher, Miss Fannie, who had promised to come.

"I told you she would, mamma; and how glad we are to see her!"

"Yes, indeed: it gives us great pleasure," said mamma.

"I am so fond of little children," said Fannie, "that I am never satisfied with a glimpse, but want to know and love them altogether. And, as Ella has crept into my Sunday-class, I shall give her little

peace till I have stolen a wee bit of her heart."

"She has given you that already," said the mamma; "she is delighted with the Sabbath-school, and has watched for the visit you promised, with hardly enough patience to give you time to come, so eager for her little sister to see you; and you know that May is ill, and cannot share all Ella's pleasure as she used to do. I don't know which is the most tried. Ella, I think; for it is harder always to see a dear one suffer, deprived of what we enjoy, than it is to endure the illness ourselves."

Fannie soon had Ella on her lap, and was asking her if she might not see the little invalid sister, and was telling her about her beautiful garden, and that they must both come and see it very soon. May was out, driving with her papa, Ella said; but she would soon be back, for she

was just getting well from a fever, and was very weak, and not able to go far.

"So that I am sure she will be back in time to see you, Miss Fannie, or else I should not half enjoy your visit. Mamma and I usually go with them; but mamma could not go to-day, and I stayed, so that she should not be alone; for we have only been here four weeks for May, and it does not seem like home. She has begun to get well, and it is so pleasant to have her out-doors again, though it is only for a little drive."

"I have brought her some flowers," said Fannie. "Do you think she will like them? Is she fond of flowers?"

"Oh, indeed, indeed she is," said Ella; "and how beautiful! What are they, Miss Fannie?"

"They are my favourite flower; and I think you can guess the name, Ella. Do

you see how they grow?" said Fannie, taking up two or three single stems, so that Ella might see more distinctly.

"Oh, mamma, see! they are little pink bells, and two on every stem. Did you ever see any thing so sweet? What do you think is the name, mamma?"

"I think I have guessed; but Miss Fannie wants you to try."

"I guess it is fairy-bells," said Ella. "No? Well, then, I must leave it for May. But they might be called that: mightn't they, mamma? They are perfectly sweet; and, oh, mamma,—do you hear?—Miss Fannie says they grow wild in the woods, and she can tell me how to find them; and if May can only go too and see them there, won't it be charming? Oh, here they come now!" she exclaimed, springing down from Fannie's lap; "and now you shall see my ray of light, my

pearl, my May-flower, my every thing that is beautiful."

"Ella! Ella!" said the mother; but she smiled as the little one bounded off out of hearing, as if she was almost pleased with the words she reproved, and, turning to Fannie, she said,—

"The child's love for her sister amounts almost to worship; and I am often puzzled whether it is right to try to check it, or to let it have its course. But it is so pure and unselfish a love, gushing from an ardent nature that loves every thing, creature and Creator, that I think it will best regulate itself. She adores the Saviour none the less for the love which she gives the darling May."

The darling May was brought in the father's arms and laid upon a lounge,—a ray of light, a pearl, a May-flower, indeed, as Ella had said. Large, lustrous eyes,

that looked as if beholding something far away; the same regular features, clear complexion, sunny curls, that Ella had, resembling her strongly,—only instead of the substantial rosy lip was an ethereal heavenly beauty; and Esther, in telling me about it, said that in that first instant when the child was laid upon the lounge, in her light muslin dress and delicate blue and white wrappings, she looked so like a spirit from another world, whose eyes were lingering on things not seen by us, more beautiful than we behold, that she could hardly believe the child was mortal.

"You can imagine nothing like it, papa. Knowing what it means when I say so, I do not think that there was ever such beauty on earth before, except the One we all know was perfect in form and comeliness."

The little spirit, however, knew the lan-

guage of earth, and was soon chatting of her drive, and admiring the flowers.

"Why, yes, Ella, I think I know the name. Don't you see? they are twins, like us, only more beautiful. Twin-flowers, or twin-sisters, I call them, Miss Fannie. Did you bring them for me? They are very beautiful, so different from any thing I ever saw before. It is very kind of you." She went on with a quiet grace beyond her years, while her expression showed the peculiar vivacity and enjoyment that belong only to a child.

Very soon Fannie rose to go.

"Oh, I have not half seen you yet. Must you go? Have you been here waiting long? I want to see you longer."

"Thank you, dear; I will come again if I may, and very soon; but I think you are tired, and we will let you rest now. If you are well enough to-morrow evening,

ask your papa to bring you all to see our lovely garden and our view of the sea. I am sure you will enjoy it, and we shall soon know each other better, and have long chats."

"Oh, Esther! Esther!" said Fannie, as they left the house, "I could not stay: could you? Did you ever feel such a thrill?—such a presence? She must be like an angel, only not strong. Let me stop and think," she continued, sinking down upon a shady seat and covering her eyes with her hands. "I felt as I have often thought I shall when I wake in heaven and see the holy beings and know I am near *Him*. I think it must be partly the reason why God doesn't let us see such beauty now: we have not strength to bear it. Don't you know the prophets were sometimes unable to bear it when they saw visions? I have not half made my

visit. I have not said any thing I meant to say; but I could not help it."

The next day Esther left; and the rest of the story of the twins I must tell you as I gathered it from Fannie's letters to Esther. The first one said that they had visited them that evening, as Fannie had asked them, and all had had a delightful time; that "mamma and papa said she was not any too enthusiastic in her admiration, after all,—only one sad thing: they say May cannot live. Mamma says she has seen that heavenly beauty before, and never knew it fail in its prophecy of early death. I have told them my first thought in taking them the twin-flowers, and they are pleased, and have been to gather some."

In the next letter, "May's mamma says that, before she was ill, one could hardly tell the twins apart; that all this ethereal beauty has come to her within a little

while, though her spirit was always perfect in loveliness."

Again:—"They are growing very fond of me, and I can hardly bear to be away from them. We have such lovely times! Very few people talk so sweetly of Jesus, and his love, and all heavenly things, as if it flowed so truly through their every-day life as a part of it, something neither to be forced nor hidden, as it too often is. Why should we either shut away out of sight our love to our heavenly Father, or make set speeches about it, any more than with regard to our precious ones here? Should the heavenly and the earthly life be separate? Should they not mingle constantly in one? Yet some good people make great walls between them."

"May tells me her father does not love the Lord. He is a good, lovely man; but he says his wife and children are enough

for him. He has no room for any other great love. It is their one sorrow. May says, 'Pray with us, Miss Fannie. He will do it some time, if we are faithful.'

"May is failing. Her parents are bitterly disappointed, thinking her recovery sure here by the sea. I suspect they begin to fear what is very plain to us."

Then there was no letter for three weeks, and we all began to be very anxious to hear again; for the story of this sweet fading flower had won the love of all our hearts. Then we had just a hurried line from Fannie, saying,—

"She will not be with us many days; and I cannot spare time to tell you any thing further now. They have all put their love about me, and May begs me so to come to her that I am there whenever I can possibly be away from other things. Oh, what a precious and mysterious gift

this love is to me! When the darling one has left us for sweeter comforts, and the loss makes leisure time unbearable, I shall fill it with telling you many lovely things concerning her."

Another week brought this:—"When May knew that she was going to die, she began to plead with her papa for the one longing wish of her heart.

"'Oh, papa, give your May this one last wish. Love what she loves. Rest where she rests, look up and see what she sees, and you *will love.*'

"'But I cannot, May. My heart is full of love now.'

"'Perhaps that is why Jesus takes me, —to make room for him.'

"'There will be no room made. I shall love you just the same.'

"'But when you know that he is holding me, that he is caring for me, keeping

me,—when you think that he gave me to you at the first,—when you think that he has given you *all* the love so precious to you, and, more than that, his own,—you cannot, cannot help it, papa.'

"'I do not know, May. When I don't have you, it may seem different; but I can think of nothing else now. I will try to do it by-and-by. But I do not know, May; and I cannot promise what I do not know.'

"'Well, papa, that comforts me a little; and, if you *try*, I shall be helping you, and asking Jesus what to do; and I think you cannot help it.'

"That same afternoon she called Ella, and said,—

"'Darling, are the twin-flowers faded?'

"'The fresh ones are,' Ella replied; 'but I have a few pressed. Would you like those?'

"'Yes, please, my sweet sister.'

"When Ella brought them, May said,—

"'You know I am going, darling?'

"'Oh, May, May, yes!' Ella said, laying her head by the side of May's on the pillow, and throwing her arm over her; 'and I am going to try to be brave, because I know it is all in love; and I *do* love *him*, and I know you will be so glorious and full of joy. But, May, I must not cry before you, and we must not say more than I can bear. Oh, sweetest of sisters! oh, beautiful, one great love of my heart! oh, my darling, my darling! do you know, will you ever, how I love you? Ever since I can remember, it has been the same.'

"'I know it, dearest, and that it is a thousandfold more than what I deserve.'

"'Oh, no, no,' interrupted Ella,—'not the tenth of what you deserve; for I have seen that I only could see, or understand,

a little part of the great beauty of my unseen May. But, darling, neither have you seen, nor can you see, the whole of my great love for you. You cannot know how I have loved you.'

"'Darling, darling, my eyes will be clearer soon; and then I shall.'

"'You will come near me, May?'

"'Yes: I am sure He will let me.'

"And, with their arms about each other, they lay still a long, long time. May thought Ella was asleep, but, looking, could see her eyes were open. Then she said,—

"'Miss Fannie brought these flowers as the emblem of our love and double life. Put them back in your Bible, darling, and, when I am gone, break off one from each stem, and they will still be like us.

"Then they lay still again a little while, and May fell asleep. and Ella watched, and

thought that even in heaven she could hardly be more beautiful. And presently the perfect repose of the sleeping face gave place to smiles, and then a look of serenest peace played upon every feature, and then a sort of rapture spread over all. Presently she stretched out her hands pleadingly; then the rapture faded, the serene peace came back, then the smiles, and then she slept again as sweetly as a babe.

"The next day she said,—

"'I had a beautiful dream yesterday, papa. Come near, and I will tell you. Mamma and Ella will not mind my whispering a little while. I dreamed that I had left you, papa, and was lying in Jesus' arms, just as I lie in yours. Oh, the peace, the exquisite joy, of resting so, and *there!* At first, I thought, I lay with my eyes shut, just in a quiet way, perfectly satisfied to lie still and let him hold me. At last, I

thought, I opened my eyes and saw what I have so often thought I should not dare to look at, because it will be so dazzlingly glorious,—his face. And the glory was all suffused with such loveliness that I could look. And oh, papa, I cannot tell you all. I will not try. And then I thought he motioned me to look at something; and I looked, and saw *you* standing here. You were weeping, and looking at the poor body I had left, and thought that it was me. And then I called, and you looked up, and saw me for a moment, and then saw who was holding me; and then your eyes were fixed on him. And I left the arms, and came to you, and you seemed to know I was coming, and held out one hand, but kept your eyes fixed on him, as if so lovely, and shaded with the other, as if he was too glorious. And I whispered, "Papa, you love Him *now?*"

"'And you said, "Forever!" and then I went back, and he held out his arms, and held me there again.'

"The next evening she passed away from us. All had been said, all had been done; and we thought she would fall into a quiet sleep, and that we should never see the eyes again, she lay so still, with the life just ebbing peacefully away.

"Presently the eyes opened; there was a beautiful light, which spread over the whole face; the hands clasped, the lips opened, and, exclaiming, 'Oh, mother! I see, I *see* my Saviour!' she left us, and went up to Him.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE next summer Fannie came to visit Esther. Esther had begged her to come in the season of the rhododendrons; and she came the last day but one in June,—that was Saturday. On Monday the weather was very hot, and they did not think of going to the grove, and the next it rained very hard; but the next, Wednesday, the third of July, was cool and pleasant, the dust well laid, and we decided without hesitation, at the breakfast-table, to improve the fine weather for our

excursion,—especially as "the Fourth" was a day of resort for all to this beautiful spot, and we were selfish enough to want the finest specimens of the elegant flowers, and as many as we could bring away. Esther's mamma was too much of an invalid to go with us: so Fannie and I drove in the pony-carriage, and Esther rode a little gray horse that was a great pet with us all. We started in good time, taking lunch with us, to make a pleasant, long day. First, we went merely to see the rhododendrons, planning to go on farther to a little waterfall half a mile beyond,—the girls to make sketches, and I to read a new book; and then in the afternoon we would return again, to pick our flowers. Esther was so eager that Fannie should see the beautiful grove, that she was not content without stopping there on the way for a first sight of it. We tied our horses

at the roadside, and stepped into a little, rough, shady path, through which we walked about five minutes and then came upon this beautiful spot. The wild growth of the flower seems more like that of the tropics than any thing we have in New England. The grove covers about half a square mile in all, judging as nearly as possible from its uneven outline. The spot is dark and damp from the shade of the trees and the wet ground, so that the stones, the old logs, and the exposed roots of the rhododendrons are covered with most exquisite mosses, and delicate ferns of every variety. The plant itself grows in great clumps, and four, five, and six feet high. The leaves are very large, shading the flower much more than in cultivation, yet not concealing the great, pink, cone-like buds, which are even more beautiful than the flower. I can hardly undertake

to describe the enthusiasm of delight with which all this was greeted by Fannie, or the quiet enjoyment of Esther in witnessing her friend's pleasure. Their expressions were somewhat in the style of all young ladies of their age,—sensible, however, and none the less pleasing to me that they pretty much exhausted the finer adjectives of our mother-tongue. No, no: I like this enthusiasm.

After a good look at this luxuriant spot, we went back to our horses, and rode on again till we came to the beautiful water-fall. Two or three solid farm-houses stood looking down on a lovely pond, which had been made from the stream for the benefit of a remarkably picturesque little mill that was placed on the other side. We left our horses in one of the sheds, and then walked along the edge of the pond, which was clear as crystal, and very beau-

tiful in its reflection of the many trees that grew thick upon its banks, and the perfect blue of the sky, and the fleecy white clouds.

Then we passed on over a little, rustic bridge at the head of the pond, and a few rods more brought us suddenly in sight of the waterfall. We felt the luscious coolness as soon as we were out of the sun, and, climbing over a few rough stones, reached Esther's favourite seat,—a large, flat rock which commanded a perfect view of the whole scene,—and there we sat down to rest.

The fall is about thirty feet in height, the water tumbling, foaming over great rocks, which render it grand, even though the height is not great. Similar rocks border its side, and in their crevices trees and bushes grow so thickly, and the stream is so narrow, that they easily meet above

and form a dense shade. Here and there trees have fallen, and lie across the stones, sometimes in such a way that the water falls over a portion of them, and sometimes lying above, forming a rustic bridge. In both cases they are covered with mosses. And then, scattered about everywhere in the cracks of the rocks, my favourite ferns grow in greatest variety and profusion. And the birds add their music to the sound of the waters all day long, never seeming to weary of their songs, as when near the dwellings of men.

Oh, what are the cares of the world, when a man may come to such a place as this, unchanging in its beauty and its song, and listen to the music of its waters as to a lullaby?—when every thing about him speaks of God, when nothing intercepts His presence, when he may rest in undisturbed communion and yield himself to the

repose of His perfect love? It seems to me that there, at such a time, if a man does love God, the world and the cares thereof may be to him as they were to Christ, —nothing to disturb his peace, nothing to disturb his calm, nothing to turn him away from a glorious life in God; only something to pity, to work for, to love.

After rambling about a little, the girls sat close together and began to sketch. I watched them a while, thanking God in my heart that two so lovely delighted to forget themselves in this sweet service; and then I took my book and commenced to read. It did not prove exactly what I thought it was,—not altogether in accord with the spirit of the place; and by-and-by I put it away, and, lying down, yielded myself to unconnected, peaceful thought. After a while I pulled a pencil and scrap of paper from my pocket, and, smiling at

myself for the attempt, thought I too would sketch.

Presently Esther looked up.

"Well, well, papa, I thought you came to recreate; and I do believe you are writing a——"

"Sermon on the decorum of young ladies, ages respectively fifteen and nineteen," I said, laughing.

"Oh, do let the sermon alone, and have a good time to-day. I don't believe you know half how beautiful it is, or you never would think of scribbling away in that dry style."

"Complimentary, my dear!"

"You know very well what I mean. If you could only sketch, it would be worth while; but I don't believe you look at these beautiful things once in five minutes."

"Whatever I am doing, I give you leave to talk to me as much as you choose."

"Then I certainly shall, just to spoil what is not a legitimate proceeding in such a place; though I never could talk much when I am sketching. But I must sacrifice myself to your good to-day."

We chatted a few minutes, and then forgot ourselves, and relapsed into silent, absorbed use of the pencil. I thought I succeeded pretty well for a first attempt from nature, especially as the subject was rather difficult for a beginner. So I worked on till Esther jumped up, saying,—

"Come, papa; this is too bad. Do give me that unlawful paper, and we will have lunch. Let me see what you are doing."

I tossed her the paper.

"Well, I certainly shall have to beg your pardon," she said. "You have been sketching, after all, and have succeeded pretty well, too. Look here, Fannie! I believe he never sketched in his life before."

Fannie took the paper, and turned it over two or three times.

"Why, yes, it *is* very good. Which is the top?"

Esther and I burst into a peal of laughter; and to this day that sketch of mine has been a family joke. No one, not even I, could determine, after it once left my hands, which was the top and which the bottom.

The day passed pleasantly, and about three o'clock we started for our rhododendrons. We each gathered all we could carry of blossoms and buds in every stage of progress. These we stowed away in the bottom of the carriage, and then started for home. When we had about a mile farther to go, we came to a place where the road branched, meeting again very near our home. Esther rode to the side of the carriage, and said,—

"Papa, please stop a minute."

I drew the reins, and she continued,—

"Please give me a few flowers, and I will ride round and see old Olive. She will like some of these branches to decorate for 'Independence day,' as she calls it. You had better go the other way; it is more shady; and I will be at home ten minutes after you arrive, unless Olive wants something." And off she rode, the colour in her cheeks a perfect match to the beautiful pink of the rhododendron-buds.

"Who is old Olive, may I ask?" said Fannie.

"An old servant in my father's family many years ago," I answered. "She is very fond of us all, and so delighted with any little remembrance. Poor thing! we cannot go to her too often; and it makes my heart ache that she has so little comfort in her old age. But she is happy

almost always, having really the greatest comfort one can ask in this life,—a contented, peaceful mind, perfectly passive in God's hands, receiving all his dealings in the most implicit confidence of unwavering love."

"Do tell me all about her," said Fannie. "I like these stories of good old people that have always been noble and true."

"There is not much to tell," I said. "She was invaluable in our family. She came to us a young widow, with her little child Mary, and remained for twenty years, serving us with a faithfulness and a high Christian principle which is very rarely found, and is an unspeakable blessing to both servant and household. When Mary was twenty-four, she married, and begged her mother to come and live in her house, which was very comfortable. With some reluctance she consented, as she had infirmities

which rendered her incapable of work, at times. And there they were, all very happy, for nine years, when Mary's husband died, causing them great grief, and making life far less easy for them,—though they own the house and a little land, and Olive has some savings. But Mary goes out to work a good deal, and, as Olive is bedridden with severe rheumatism since last winter, it makes it pretty hard for her. But she is very patient; and the oldest son, Alick, a nice boy of ten, always stays with her when Mary is away. He is a fine little fellow, taking the tenderest womanly care of his grandmother and his mischievous little brother, four years younger than he, —a sprite that would try the patience of a saint. But this is only from his mischief, as he is an affectionate little fellow, and easily managed when not beside himself with fun. We all think Alick quite a

wonder; and he is an immense comfort to his mother, who already considers him quite a stay and staff."

"But Olive can't be so very old, is she? You call her old Olive."

"No: she is only sixty-one; but Esther has always called her so, and I suppose she seems very aged to her, particularly as she is so infirm. She almost idolizes Esther, my father's only grandchild; and Esther is there a great deal, reading to her and doing many little comforting things. Now, my fair little lady," said I, as we drove to the door, "will you take these pinkie posies in to dear mamma, and tell her about our pleasant day, while I attend to the pony and get my letters?"

In about ten minutes I was back again, and found the fair ones in an ecstasy of admiration over the flowers, putting them in a great blue wash-tub half full of water.

mamma sitting by and laughing, and Fannie insisting that they must have a good drink all night, and not think of being arranged till to-morrow.

"Now, then, come and sit on the piazza," I said. "It is cooler than it is here. You have no idea what a nice breeze there is, and not a bit of sun there since morning. Here, mamma; sit still, and let me roll you out, easy-chair and all. You must see how blithe the old white-haired fellow is to-night, after his romantic day with the young beauties. Has Fannie used her tongue fast enough to tell you every thing in these ten minutes? Have you seen the sketches?"

We began to talk it all over, telling each detail of beauty and impression, when Esther rode by very rapidly, and, I thought, very pale, all the roses that I saw upon her cheeks half an hour before, entirely gone.

"Where can the child be going?" I exclaimed, and rushed down to the gate.

She rode half down the street; stopped, spoke to some one, turned quickly round, and hurried back. Oh, how pale she was! and blood upon her gloves and dress!

"My child, my child, what has happened? What is the matter?" I exclaimed. "Do tell me."

"It is Alick, papa. He is hurt, and I have been helping him. I think you had better get right on the pony and go out. I don't know if he will live. I found the doctor right on the street,—thank Heaven! and he will be there before you. Don't wait for questions, papa. They need you. I will have Mary sent out. It is an artery cut. He has bled fearfully."

Fannie had come down to the gate. I turned to her, and said, "Take care of the child: she looks ready to faint. Get her

some water;" and, mounting the horse, I galloped away. The story was briefly this. Alick had been mowing the little plot of grass—all they had—in front of the house. For this purpose he had borrowed a scythe from a neighbour, who told him not to trouble himself to return it, as he should go by with his cart in the evening and would stop and take it then. So Alick hung the scythe on the fence, and began to weed some flower-beds close by. Presently he heard Johnnie's voice, in a sing-song tone,—

"Time cuts down all, both great and small. Look out, Alick!"

Alick looked up, and there was the little urchin, looking as much like the picture of Time in the Primer as he could make himself,—forelock and all,—swinging the scythe back and forth, and getting quite too near to Alick. Before the latter had time

to see into the dubious fun or to get out of the way, the scythe hit his leg and cut an artery. Of course Father Time and mischief were gone. Johnnie didn't mean to. Never thought he'd hit. No; mischievous boys never do *mean* to do harm. The little fellow was really overwhelmed with grief, but knew not what to do, and, rushing to poor grandmamma, who was unable to rise, could neither make her clearly understand what had happened, nor comprehend in his turn what she told him to do. She tried to call to Alick through the open window, to know how much he was hurt and what he had best do; but by that time the poor fellow was so faint he could hardly hold on to his leg, which he did make out from old Olive that he should do. But his strength gave way, and he was just fainting, when God sent Esther. In an instant she had learned what had happened. Taking

her handkerchief, she tied it with all her strength tight about the knee; but, finding it was not sufficient to check the fearful bleeding, she seized a stick which lay close at hand, and thrust it in the knot, twisting the handkerchief tighter than it could have been tied. This had the desired effect. And, making Johnnie hold the stick, she lifted Alick to his grandmother's bed, found some brandy, mixed it strong, and left old Olive trying to revive him. Then, mounting her horse, she rode off for the doctor at the greatest speed. When I arrived, Alick was conscious again, though still very faint, and the doctor was dressing the wound. When he had finished, he turned to me, and said,—

"Your daughter has saved this boy's life. She had done nobly, and what few girls of her age would have had presence of mind to do."

I stayed until Mary had been back some time, and the doctor had left, and there seemed nothing more to do but to comfort poor Johnnie, who was a picture of woe. Then I went home, to comfort the dear ones there and tell them that all was well.

There were many thankful hearts that night. I sat in my study, close to the open window, looking at the stars, when Esther came in for the usual good-night.

I drew her to me, and she kneeled down there and watched them with me.

"How beautiful they are, papa!"

"Yes; and they seem very near to-night. God has been very near to you, my child; and you have done the work he gave with the true courage and calmness of a Christian woman. May his blessing rest upon you richly, Esther, and make you always faithful in his love and efficient in his

work! Your father's blessing always rests upon you."

We stayed very still a while, watching the stars; and then, coming a little closer to me, she whispered,—

"Papa, when he gives me some special thing to do for him, I feel as if the pierced hand touched me. That is what thrills me so. I feel as if he had been so near,— as if his hand had put in mine something to give away for him, and he had touched me when he put it there. It is so blessed! so blessed!"

A few minutes afterwards she kissed me and went up to bed.

The next Wednesday afternoon the two girls went to the sewing-circle, which in our cool mountain air is continued through the summer with even more success than in the winter, when the severe weather makes regular attendance more difficult.

There is no noise, no weariness; always a lively interest, a joy, and a sense of doing real good, that make it a recreation. And then the reward they have is so rich! Their way is to find out about the families of some poor ministers at the West, who deny themselves life's comforts from the purest love of Christ's work; or perhaps some nearer home are selected. They ascertain the number, sizes, ages, of the children, and, as nearly as possible, what each most needs. Then they cut garments accordingly, and for lighter work have a basket of fancy-articles, so that those who find heavy sewing tedious occupy themselves with various little things. All children who will come are welcomed, and given work appropriate to each. After all are fairly assembled and the work assigned, some one, appointed for the afternoon, begins to read aloud. If the book is suited

to all, all listen. If not specially fitted to interest the little folk, they have a separate room, book, and reader. This continues for an hour and a half, with a recess of five minutes for change of work, seats, or any necessary stir, and generally a new reader. Then the gentlemen come in for early tea; and in summer it is generally served—a great additional charm—out-of-doors.

After that, for half an hour, there is singing of miscellaneous character, lively and pleasant, and always something of praise to the One beloved; and every voice joins, even to the wee bairns. Then, with a blessing from the pastor, they separate at an early hour, before there is any chance of weariness. When the garments arranged are all finished, we have a tea-drinking in the chapel, admission ten cents, supper free, and the fancy articles, more or less valuable, arranged on a side-table for sale.

The proceeds, and some few donations, go to make up a little purse to accompany the box of clothing. And then comes the reward that more than repays any little trouble that may have been taken,—the letter acknowledging the gift, always so grateful, invariably overflowing with thanksgiving, every thing just what was needed, and the money so unexpected and coming in a straitened time. Well, well, the dear Lord watches his own; and it is a blessed thing, as Esther says, when he gives us something to do for them, and, through them, for him. "Something, my God, for thee, something for thee:" that beautiful hymn comes to my mind. Perhaps you do not know it.

"Something, my God, for thee,
Something for thee!
That each day's setting sun may bring
Some penitential offering,

In thy dear name some kindness done,
To thy dear love some wanderer won,
Some trial meekly borne for thee,
Dear Lord, for thee!

"Something, my God, for thee,
Something for thee!
That to thy gracious throne may rise
Sweet incense from some sacrifice,—
Uplifted eyes, undimm'd by tears,
Uplifted faith, unstain'd by fears,
Hailing each joy as light from thee,
Dear Lord, from thee.

"Something, my God, for thee,
Something for thee!
For the great love that thou hast given,
For the dear hope of thee and heaven,
My soul her first allegiance brings,
And upward plumes her heaven-ward wings,
Nearer to thee."

This Wednesday afternoon that I began to tell you about was remarkably beautiful. We had told Fannie all I have told you, and she went to the circle full of interest. Esther said she thought it might be

out-of-doors, as the day was so fine, and the grounds which belonged to the lady receiving were very pleasant. And they were delighted, when they arrived, to find her surmise correct, and chairs and settees under the trees, the table placed in a pretty spot, the white cloth trimmed with green leaves and a few vases of beautiful flowers, and every thing arranged in a lovely way. Everybody was glad to see everybody; the children were merry, the birds sang, the fingers were diligent, the books were charming,—every thing the colour of rose to my old, partial eyes. The little folks wanted me to read to them, and Esther and Fannie flattered me by calling themselves little folks and coming to listen to the sweet little tale assigned to them. Sometimes they laughed, sometimes they wept; and when it was ended, all said, "How beautiful!" Then the very little

ones were taken aside,—I say not by whom,—for a little frolic of ten or fifteen minutes; and gradually they were joined by the whole circle, and everybody grew young, and thought they were children again, I believe. And then, after a simple repast, we sang praises to our Father, and went home with joyful hearts.

## CHAPTER VII.

ANNIE was perfectly charmed with the sewing-circle.

"I wonder how it would do for me to get our children together so?" she said. "I never could undertake the old folks, they are so stiff and formal at home: I should like to wake them up and show them how to unbend and be happy, though; but I never should undertake that. But the little ones, I think, I might manage,—my own little girls at Sunday-school are so lovely, and if I began with them the rest might come in. What do you think, Esther?"

They talked it over. Fannie grew earnest, and, before she left, was quite decided to begin in a small way with her own little pets, sewing, perhaps, for some poor child in their neighbourhood, and then, if God's blessing was upon it, it would grow to something of larger size. When she left us, she went for a visit to some other friend, and after that, returning home, went right to work to commence her little plan. Her scholars numbered seven, from ten to twelve years of age. They were all pleasant, amiable little girls, very fond of their teacher, and never happier than when at Sunday-school. Fannie had a little plan of her own in conducting the lessons of her class. After the general exercises at the opening of the school, she turned to her girls, and, sometimes giving a pleasant word or inquiry to each, sometimes a gentle salutation full of loveliness, she reverently

opened her precious Bible. Holding it half closed in her hand, she would repeat with them, in concert, a verse of Scripture which she had selected for their motto during the previous week, and, hoping they had all remembered and been aided by it, she would repeat one for the week following, telling them where to find it, and explaining its meaning and how they could be guided by its teaching through the week. Then they would repeat, in concert, a few verses of the New Testament, or a Psalm, that all had learned for that day. And then, unless she had some special thing to say to them, they took up the lesson of the day. First they read through the passage embraced in the lesson, each reading one verse, and then Fannie commenced asking the questions from the book, often asking others, and giving anecdotes and illustrations full of lively interest. So all

were occupied and full of interest until the school was closed, the bell always sounding too soon for Fannie and her pupils.

The first Sabbath after her absence, she received a warm welcome from her little ones. Of course there were various greetings and questions; and then, when all had been said, and verses recited, Fannie suggested her plan. She told them what she had seen and heard of our little sewing-circle, —of the pleasure all derived from the work, and the joyful result, and how the children being there, even some very little ones, had suggested to her the idea that *they* might meet together and do some good. Then she spoke of the pleasure that came from doing something for Jesus' sake,— trying to comfort some poor child of his, less blessed than themselves; how there is no joy like it in all the world; and it would be very pleasant to her if they would

come to her in this way and learn to taste the blessedness of doing good. She would not ask any of them that day to say if they would or would not come to her once a week for this. She would rather they would think about it till the next Sabbath, and consider if they would really be willing to come regularly for two hours every Saturday, and in the mean time she would be planning more positively for whom they should sew. Their faces looked bright, as if they liked the plan; but she gave them no chance to say a word, taking the question-book and going directly on with the lesson.

The next Sabbath, when they met, she went on so quietly with her first exercises that they wondered if she had forgotten all about the little sewing-circle. But no, indeed! When all had been done as usual, and they were ready for the lesson, she

asked each one what they had decided about her plan. All consented, excepting one.

Fannie said, "This pleases me very much. I thought perhaps not more than one would be willing; and only one holds back. And perhaps even Mary, when she sees the enjoyment I feel sure we shall have, will like to come. I would like to have any of you ask any little friend to join us. The more that come willingly, the better. I shall welcome all whom you may like to bring. There is a poor woman, a widow with three children, who lives in South Street; and I think we will begin with making some clothes for her little girl, four years old. The little thing is very destitute, though her mother does all she is able to make them comfortable. She is a good woman, whom my mother has known for years; and I feel sure that, in doing

something for her, God will bless the work of my dear scholars' hands."

So the next Saturday they commenced their labour of love. Esther heard from Fannie now and then. After two or three weeks, every thing progressed well, and Fannie had commenced reading some little stories to them while they sewed. But this she found rather difficult, as she was often interrupted with questions about the work. Then, later, she wrote that several other little girls had joined them through the invitation of her own scholars, who were getting quite enthusiastic about their work, sometimes taking it home to sew upon through the week. And at the end of two months the little wardrobe was completed. The day it was finished, Fannie told the children that she wanted them to come as usual the next Saturday, but that they need not expect to sew. The

work was done, and, if they were willing to continue the sewing-circle, she would tell them on that day what she proposed they should do. But her plan for the next meeting was a little lighter than usual. She proposed to ask the poor girl for whom they had been sewing to come with her mother and receive the things, and then Fannie would give them all a little tea-party out-of-doors. Moreover, she wanted them to ask any young friends who belonged to the Sabbath-school, or any others, to come, that they might witness the pleasure that they had in doing good, and perhaps more might be induced to join them, seeing their happiness and how happy they made the poor child.

When the day arrived, Fannie first made arrangements for her rural supper in a lovely grove close by the house, where they had often sat while sewing. Then

she received the mother and the little girl, and together they dressed her in some of the pretty new clothes, and Fannie curled her soft, wavy locks, and the child was really beautiful, and, though full of wonder, she was radiant with happiness. Then the children began to come,—one, two, four, ten, fifteen, twenty, even twenty-two,—more than Fannie had imagined would possibly come. Her own darling class, and the few who had joined them in sewing, were beside themselves with delight, charmed with the occasion, and with the appearance of the little protégé; and the others looked on in wonder. They could scarcely believe that this was the work of their hands, and danced about the little girl till she was fairly bewildered. Some of the girls who had never been there before said that they did not believe the others had really done all the work; they might have done a part,

but they guessed Miss Fannie had done most. One of Fannie's scholars answered,—

"What makes you think so? To be sure, we haven't done a great deal any one day; but then, Miss Fannie says, so much is accomplished by a little done regularly. And she told us she did nothing but the cutting."

"Did she sit and do nothing while you sewed?"

"No, indeed! that wouldn't be like Miss Fannie. She had a deal to do to keep us all going, I can tell you. And you never could guess what she did the rest of the time, to make it *so* pleasant for us all. So I will tell you. She read to us the prettiest and best little stories you ever heard. I wonder where she could have found them? They were so much better than any stories I ever read."

Fannie's papa and mamma were there

too, enjoying the scene, and winning their way to the children, so pleasantly that one of the girls,—not very mannerly, I confess, —who had wished "those old folks would keep away," afterwards said she was glad she had not her wish, "for it was the best part of the whole to have them there." Then there was a young lady friend of Fannie's, a teacher in the Sunday-school, who had promised to help her in future, so that one could read and one attend to the work. When the children had had some games, and their supper had been served from a round table and snowy cloth under a great elm-tree, Fannie gave each one present a lovely bouquet of flowers which John had made. Then the poor girl and her mother disappeared, bearing their bundle, with happy, grateful faces; and then Fannie spoke to all, and asked how many would like to join the girls' sewing-society

Eighteen out of the twenty-two present would like to come. Then Fannie told them that a week from that day she would be ready for them,—that she was not yet quite decided for what they should work, but she had in view what she thought would prove a pleasant plan, if they were able to carry it out; that she had not yet been quite able to arrange it, but by the time they met again she would be ready to make it known for their approval. Then they all went home, after singing one of their sweet Sunday-school hymns; and they certainly carried away hearts far lighter and happier for having begun to taste the peculiar, precious joy of doing good.

"I never thought it would be such fun to sew," said one.

"Nor I," said another; "but then Miss Fannie has such a way of doing things."

"I never thought before that I could do

any thing good. I thought I wasn't old enough," said one who belonged to another class in the Sabbath-school.

"Oh, you wouldn't think so if you were in Miss Fannie's class," said one of her scholars, who loved her dearly. "She tells us how the very least children can do good. She says no one is too young to do something for Jesus every day,—to speak a kind word, to give away a toy to some poor child, or to help an old person in their work; and, if any thing don't seem to turn up to give us a chance of doing some real thing for some one, she says if we will only make our own ways and faces bright and gentle and happy, that we shall carry a sunshine with us everywhere, that will do everybody good without our knowing it."

"Now, Ella Dean," said the girl who called Fannie's papa and mamma the old

folks, "I think that's quite a sermon. Can't you give us some more?"

"Yes, I can," said Ella, brightly, nothing daunted by the jeering tone. "She says that no one is too young to do good or be good; that any one can be a Christian from their babyhood, if they are rightly inclined and rightly taught; that Jesus loves and keeps the little lambs that grow right up in his fold, even better than those that wander off and then come back again. At any rate, they needn't wander off; and then they grow up loving him all the time. You had better come to the sewing-circle and learn to know Miss Fannie and her sweet ways, and hear the lovely stories she reads us about these things. You'll think better of it and come, won't you, Alice?" (for this was one of the girls who had refused to come.) "I'm sure you'll like it. We have real nice times; and it's so

pleasant to know that it is all to make some one happier and more comfortable than they would have been if we hadn't taken a little pains."

"Well, you may like it," said Alice; "but, for my part, when Saturday is my only holiday, I'd rather do something else for a good time."

"That is as one feels," said Ella; "but I never enjoyed any play half so well, and I never had such bright Saturdays. Perhaps you'll think so too, sometime."

Fannie's partly-arranged plan had been formed in this way. About ten days before the little tea-party, a friend of her father's came to visit them. He was a clergyman, and was to preach for them the next Sabbath, their pastor being away. The two gentlemen were walking in the garden one evening, and Fannie's papa had been telling Mr. Barnard about John. Then they

spoke generally of the extreme tenderness of God's providence, and then, further, of its mystery in many cases, and how never until the day when all things shall be made clear can we understand why he so sorely tries some who are most faithful to him. Speaking so, Mr. Barnard said,—

"We have an instance of this at home, One of our village boys grew up as lovely, pure, and noble a character as one ever meets. He seemed perfectly spotless. He studied for the ministry, married, and was settled over a large country parish. He had four children,—the oldest and youngest boys, the others girls. His salary was comfortable, but no more than sufficient to make the two ends meet. Of course he laid up nothing. He had preached during fifteen years, when, a few months ago, he was stricken with paralysis. Since then he is utterly unable to do any thing. His

people made him a present of two thousand dollars, and he came back, with his family, to his native village. There, with one thousand dollars, he bought a small house and a bit of land. The rest of his money he put out at interest, and, depending upon his boy of fourteen to raise what he could upon the land for the supply of the family, settled down in the sweetest faith for the Lord to provide the rest in His own way. And then God took away his boy. And now what are they to do? His townsmen and his old congregation do something for him; but he is very poor. Is it not strange, strange, and full of mystery?"

Fannie heard all this. Next morning she drew Mr. Barnard aside, and asked,—

"That minister and his family that you were telling papa about last evening: are they very refined people?"

"Very, my dear. Why do you ask?' said Mr. Barnard, smiling.

"I will tell you," replied Fannie. "Our Sunday-school has a little sewing-society of the children, and they are just getting through with the work on hand, and not quite decided what to do next. Last night I was in the arbour, reading, and heard you tell this story; and I am so filled with the impression that God meant me to hear it, and that we should do something for them, that I must ask you. Do you think they are too refined, would be too sensitive, to let us do something for them?"

"My dear child, you mean to ask, Have they too much false pride? I answer, No! They are true, humble followers of Christ; and any such, however refined and cultivated and used to independent living, will, if need be, receive any thing that is offered in Christ's name with gratitude and a de-

light in feeling that it comes directly from his hand. I am sure, Fannie, with you, that God meant you to hear about them; and I am grateful that even my tongue has thus been of use. Go to work for them, if it pleases your little sewing-society, and I am sure you will have the Lord's blessing."

Fannie's heart was full. She felt sure that Christ gave her this work to do; she felt as if it were a token that he approved and blessed the task she had undertaken. Her first step, after thanking him and seeking his continued blessing, was to write a note to Mrs. Willard, saying that she had heard Mr. Barnard tell the story of their sorrow, and asking her permission to let the little girls send a few things to her children by-and-by. This she sent by Mr. Barnard, and eagerly waited for the reply. It came two or three days after the tea-party, full of sweetness and gratitude and

appreciation of the delicacy of Fannie's note. So then her heart was more than ever glad. She wrote another letter, to ask the sizes and ages of the children. The next question was funds. They must have more money. When they first commenced, each little girl had paid ten cents for membership: some had given more, and Fannie and others had given materials. But then it took very little to make a wardrobe for one little girl of four years. Now their plan was larger. What should they do? She talked it over with her mamma, and the young friend who was to help her in the care of the children. They would each give something; and then a new tax for membership would bring a trifle more. Fannie said she would ask help from one or two friends, and some materials might be given for making over.

At the first meeting of the children there

was little to do. Fannie told them her plan; and all approved. She said there could not be much sewing that afternoon; that, with the little taxes, they had ten dollars for a start; during the coming week she would buy materials, and on the next Saturday would have work cut out for all. Then she proposed that a little box should stand always in the room where they met, and any one inclined could drop a contribution there, should it be but a penny. Then she produced a book that Esther had sent to her to read to them, called "Ministering Children,"—a lovely story, that ought to be in every library. She read half an hour, and then they went home, delighted with the commencement of the book, and full of interest in the new work.

So it began; and the interest increased rather than diminished. They were more

and more delighted with the book; and one day, at the proposal of a little girl, they named themselves "The Society of Ministering Children." Then the parents and some of the Sunday-school teachers began to come to see them work; and one day one of the older girls, laughing, said these visitors must be reminded that they could do something besides look, and approve, and say, "Very good;" and she took the little contribution-box, and, hanging it on a conspicuous part of the wall, printed upon it, in large letters, "Contribution-box of the Society of Ministering Children." This had the desired effect; and almost every one who came dropped something in, and others sent materials for work. Other scholars from the Sunday-school joined, and a few who belonged elsewhere, among them Alice, and the one in Fannie's class who at first refused; and two or three more lady teachers

came in regularly to help Fannie and Miss Blake, as they found the care too heavy for their hands alone. Then Fannie wrote to Mr. Barnard, telling him how wonderfully they were prospering, and that, having more than they needed for the children, she wished Mrs. Barnard would try to find out what would be acceptable to Mr. and Mrs. Willard in the way of clothing, and give her some hints how best to work for them, too. Then she began to have an idea of a little tea-party, like ours, when the sewing should be finished and the box ready. How delightful it would be to have a little table of fancy articles and add a purse to the other things!—a thing she had not thought of before, because her first plan seemed quite as much as was practicable. But the success was so much greater than her hope, that now she thought she might do more. When she suggested

this to the children, they were delighted with the plan, and worked with new interest; and so, in time, many pretty things were made. God's blessing seemed to rest upon the work, and every thing progressed satisfactorily.

All this time Fannie had carefully concealed the name of those for whom they worked. She told the children and inquiring visitors about the family, the sad story,—all that she herself knew; but her nature was strongly sympathetic, and she shrank from giving a publicity to the names of these dear children of God which she felt would be painful to herself in the same circumstances: so that no one knew the names of the Willards, nor where they lived, excepting herself and her friend Miss Blake.

Aside from the work accomplished, and the love of doing good inspired in the chil-

dren, there were other unexpected fruits of Fannie's labours, which excited still more her gratitude to God for using her in this sweet service. One afternoon she noticed that Alice kept on sewing after the other girls went away, and she asked if Fannie would let her wait while the things were gathered up, as she wanted to finish a seam she was sewing. Fannie said, "Yes;" and presently they were alone.

Fannie said, "It is a great pleasure to have you join us, Alice; and I think you love the work as well as any of the children, now. Certainly you are the first who has wanted to sew longer than the regular time; though some have taken the work home."

Fannie was surprised and touched to see Alice's tears flowing fast as she bent over her work more closely, and answered,—

"There is something in it all,—I don't

know what it is, Miss Fannie,—in the work or in the reading,—it all makes me feel so strange. I love to come; and yet I am not happy. I want something; I *want* something."

"You want the peace of the Lord Jesus abiding in your heart. You are restless for that, I think."

"I don't know, Miss Fannie. I think I want to be like you."

"That would not satisfy you, Alice. There is one example given us, and God has made us so that we can never be content unless our hearts are looking up to Jesus, seeking his love and giving him ours, striving then, in the faithfulness that only love brings, to do and be like him. You must read his words; you must study his life; you must seek the peace he has promised to his followers."

"How can I do it?"

"Go to him, as you come to me,—only more fully. Open your heart to him; pray. Let him in, and he will show you all the rest. The Holy Spirit is touching your heart, Alice. Pray him to show you your need of peace, and the way to it."

"I will, Miss Fannie; and I thank you for your kind words. Will you pray for me?"

"Yes, Alice; and do the same for yourself, and then all will be right. As the body needs food, the soul needs prayer. Lift up your heart continually to God, and you will have life."

After this, Fannie talked with Alice many times, and watched her very closely. The uneasy look gradually gave way to one of rest and joy. Then came an expression of sweetest peace; and now, at this day when I write, Alice's countenance is one of those rarely seen, so unmistakably

suffused with the loveliness of Christ that a glance is sufficient to recognize in her one whose heart is his abode. And she is not the only one thus influenced by this little meeting where the love of Jesus is the motive and the theme. Others were touched and led, as she was, "by the work, or the reading, or a something, they knew not what;" and still, at this day, while the Society of Ministering Children is busily at work, Fannie writes that the little ones come to her to ask the way of life. It is a blessed work, a blessed spirit, a blessed result of obeying the command, "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

The middle of December came. The work was almost finished. Fannie wanted to send the things for a Christmas-gift; but it seemed almost impossible to do it, especially as she wished to have the little tea-

party and must take time to arrange that. But the children said they would come an extra afternoon, and then, working on the last Saturday before Christmas,—which came on Wednesday,—they thought they could accomplish it. They planned their tea-party for Monday night. Their fancy articles were tasteful and very beautifully made. The girls had grown warm with zeal, and many had made pretty things at home. Some had arranged sea-mosses, others little baskets of coloured lichens; and one little girl, who had great skill in pressing ferns and coloured leaves, brought a little fancy basket full of these. Then some one proposed making some wreaths for sale; and when Fannie went to John, asking him to get the greens, and telling him what they were for, he said, "Miss Fannie, could not I make some bouquets to sell, too?"

"Why," said Fannie, "that is charming! I never thought of that. I will ask papa if we can have the flowers; and, if he is willing, yes indeed you may. It is a delightful idea, John. You are the brightest of the whole of us."

"My dear," said Fannie's papa, "you are welcome. John may strip the greenhouse, if he will. I refused you a flower once, but I shall never do so again."

At first Fannie could not think what her father meant; then she exclaimed, "Oh, papa, you don't remember that, do you?"

"I shall never forget it, my darling."

Fannie wrote to little Ella,—the broken twin-flower,—inviting her to come for the occasion. She was a great pet of Fannie's, and had often been to visit her since their first acquaintance. The week before Christmas she arrived, very lovely, very beauti-

ful. The next day, when Fannie was in her room, telling her all about her arrangements, Ella went to her trunk and took out a bundle.

"Mamma said, if you thought this would be of service to your friend, she would be glad to have you put it in the box. It is a cloak she had last winter, and she has no more use for it."

"Oh, Ella, Ella," exclaimed Fannie, "you could not have brought any thing more acceptable! Oh, it is just the thing I wanted, and *so* nice! Mrs. Barnard wrote me that Mrs. Willard needed out-door garments, but she only mentioned it because I begged her to tell every thing, and said that we would do what we could. She did not imagine our little girls would be able to do any thing to supply that want; and now it has come, just because the Lord knows she needs it; and I dare say

she has been praying for it. Oh, I do thank you so much. There! I do believe, when our box is off, we shall be the happiest young folks in the land. Now come down while I show this to mamma; and then you must see the things we are making."

Every thing went on better than Fannie dared to hope. On Saturday all was finished,—and well done, too, considering the little experience of many of the little hands. There were garments for all, even down to the little boy of three years old, besides two pretty suits of blue flannel clothes; and then two dresses each for the girls. For Mrs. Willard, besides other things, there was one new dress, and Fannie's mamma had given a beautiful soft wrapper. For Mr. Willard there was also a dressing-gown of warm gray cloth, the material for which had been sent in anonymously. So that the box was very complete. Almost every

things had been packed that last Saturday morning, and when the last things were finished, and the children gone, Fannie's papa put in the rest. That was a joyful hour; but Fannie was tired, the things must be cleared away, the tea-party was yet to be accomplished, and she waited yet a little for the feeling that the work was done.

On Monday morning the children and teachers met in the church-chapel, some to tie greens, some to arrange tables. The children were merrier and happier than ever, and vied with each other who should make the prettiest wreaths. The mammas were interested because the children were, and dainties came pouring in for the supper-table. This was very long, and placed on one side of the little chapel, and was tastefully trimmed with green leaves sewed on the edges of the cloth and scattered around

the plates, and three large vases of laurel beautifully arranged. Opposite was the table for the Christmas greens,—wreaths, crosses, and long straight bunches for placing over pictures, all intermingled and enlivened with the berry of the bitter-sweet, our substitute for holly. Then at the farther end were two smaller tables, one for the little fancy affairs, and the other for John's flowers. The latter was the pride and delight of all; and as Fannie saw how many flowers John had brought, more than she thought possible, and noticed the exquisite taste with which he had arranged them, she felt no further doubt of the complete success of her little enterprise, which had grown so much beyond her thought. Besides the pretty mosses and baskets already mentioned, the fancy table was also tastefully arranged with various crocheted, knitted things, which an old

man such as I can hardly be expected to describe. And then there were transparencies of crosses and heads, beautifully cut in bristol-board; and the crown of all this child-skill was a contribution of little Ella's which touched Fannie exceedingly. It was a painting of a basket of twin-flowers in water-colours, tastefully framed in a simple passe-partout. And this was all.

At three o'clock every thing was ready, and the last patient workers went home to rest and dress. And how shall I tell you about the evening? You have all been in such places, and can imagine this. But what I can I will. The lights were bright, the children tastefully dressed, their greatest adornment being the brightest and happiest of faces. The little chapel was filled with people, full of kindly interest, responding to the invitation of the children to their friends. This was the only means

that Fannie had taken of announcing the evening's entertainment,—letting the little ones tell, in their own enthusiastic way, of their desire to receive. There was a small admission-fee, and then the supper was free to all, as Fannie said the idea of selling things to eat at a fair, large or small, had always been extremely distasteful to her. The other articles people were more than welcome to buy. She herself secured Ella's little water-colour; and the other things sold well, either from real merit, or from benevolent interest on the part of the purchaser.

Just before the end of the evening the children belonging to the society were invited to meet again in the morning, and then all went home excepting Fannie, her father and mother, and two or three others, who remained to leave things in order for the night; and, while they were counting

the receipts, Ella slipped into Fannie's hand a bill for fifty dollars, which she said her father had asked her to give her then in May's name. This was a little more joy than Fannie was prepared to bear; and I shall hardly be justified in telling what I know of the overflowing of her heart that night, as she has never confessed it even to Esther, from whom she kept no other details of these events.

The next morning the children assembled, as requested. Fannie appointed a Saturday in February for the next meeting of the Society of Ministering Children; then she told them the amount received the night before. Besides May's gift of fifty dollars, there were sixty-five taken at the door and tables. A large proportion of this was the proceeds of the flower-table. The bouquets were all choice, and John had shown much skill, not only in arranging

them, which was always the case, but in making a great many more than seemed possible from the quantity of flowers he cut. The Christmas green had been in great demand, and the little fancy table brought its due share. So that, counting all sources of receipts, it was not really surprising that they had taken twice as much as the most sanguine had thought possible. She said she hoped they were learning together, and would remember all their lives, that the truest, purest joy permitted us of God comes from doing good, when we do it from love to Jesus and our fellow-men. She hoped that they had been half as happy as she had been: she did not think that she had ever known a time more full of joy than the last few months. And now the box was packed, and ready to start in the morning express; and when word was received of its safe

arrival she would let them know, and they should hear the letter. Then the children took all that was left on the supper-table, and carried it away to give to poor people living near; and their hearts were full of joy, and their steps were light, and the bright sun shone upon them full of blessing; for their little hands had done that which would make many hearts glad, and those hearts were hearts that Jesus loved; and he said with his own lips, when he was on earth, that what we do for his beloved we do for him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

OME, Marion," said Kate Willard on Christmas eve to her sister, not quite two years younger than herself,—the one eleven, the other nearly thirteen,—"come, Marion, come up to our room, and I will tell you my plan. I am sure you will like it; and you've been such a good little thing to trust me all this time. You see, dear mamma is so weak; and I thought a good Christmas breakfast, with a nice cup of Mocha coffee, such as we used to have, would show her the

love all the same, and really do her more good than the little pincushion. I knew my twenty-five cents wouldn't be enough for this good breakfast, and I wanted yours to help; and you are such a darling dear little precious wee bit of a tell-tale, you dearie," laughed Katie, giving Marion a loving kiss, "that I thought perhaps your sweet heart couldn't quite keep it all a secret; and I want to surprise papa and mamma. Now I'm going to tell you my plan; and then you shall tell me that you forgive me, for I know you will."

"Oh, you know I always like to have you plan, Katie; and as to the forgiving, I'm sure I do, if there's any thing to forgive. What is the plan?"

"Oh, it isn't very much; but you know we can't do much now, at any rate, and mamma will love the little just as well. See what a splendid moonlight it is; and

I have been begging her to let us go out, if it *is* evening, just into Mr. Bean's store: he is always so kind, and we will be quiet and good and come right back. And mamma said, after thinking a minute, 'Yes, Katie: I can trust you, darling.' Wasn't it sweet and blessed to have her say that? Now, I want twenty cents of mine to buy all the coffee I can get for it, and then five of mine and five of yours to buy some eggs; and then, if you will get a loaf of baker's bread, you will have ten cents left, and I think we can get up the nicest little breakfast, and it will make mamma feel strong all day, and perhaps she will almost be merry for a little while. We'll get up early, and have every thing in order, and the kitchen so warm, before she comes out. I'll make a splendid omelet,—I know just how, for I used to see Bridget do it,—and some fricaseed potato, and the

toast of baker's bread, and the coffee! Won't it be splendid?"

"Yes, indeed! Let's go. Oh, it is just the nicest thing you could have thought of, Katie!" said Marion, giving her sister an enthusiastic hug.

"And, now, what shall we do with the ten cents? I know what I should like; but I want two things, and can't do both. I should like to get some oysters for papa; but then I should like to buy something for Eddy, too."

"So would I," said Katie, as they went out; "but you know we have the picture scrap-book for him, and papa will make up a story for every picture and keep him happy many a long hour. I'd get the oysters, if I were you, and before they are up we'll scallop them and tuck them away all ready for baking at dinner-time. It will be just a little dish for papa; and you

know he used to like them so. What do you think?"

"Yes; I guess that will have to do. But poor little Eddy! it seems as if he ought to have something more than that for Christmas," answered Marion, who made a special pet of her little brother.

"Well, do just as you like, darling," said Katie; "but perhaps Jesus will send him something; and I think this is best, for he can have some of the nice things to eat, and I am sure they will do mamma and papa so much good." And away they went in the clear, cold air, carrying two little hearts as warm and glowing with unselfish love as any to be found in all the wide world on that Christmas-eve.

Mr. Bean was at the farther end of his store, waiting upon an old woman, while in front two clerks attended to half a dozen other people.

"Oh, what a good chance!" whispered Katie to Marion: "he's all alone over there! Come quick!"

Mr. Bean bent a benevolent, homely face over the counter, and said,—

"Well, my little ladies, what shall I serve you with, this bright afternoon?'

Mr. Bean had been a kind and pleasant neighbour, often showing some little attention to the children, giving them a ride, or filling a basket with apples, or sending in a little choice fruit. So that Katie answered with more freedom than she would have shown a stranger.

"Now, Mr. Bean, you mustn't laugh at our great purchases. We've just a little money, and we are going to make as merry a Christmas with it as we can. Please give me all the coffee that twenty cents will pay for: I don't want any kind but the best Mocha. Then I want ten cents'

worth of eggs, and a dozen oysters. Now promise not to laugh."

"No, indeed! no, indeed! But it seems to me you're late with your purchases Everybody got through buyin' for Christmas, and it's a bad time for storekeepers. Prices go right down as soon as folks go home for Christmas. You ought to have come in sooner, for my sake. I shall have to give you almost a pound of coffee, and half a dozen eggs; and as for the oysters, *they* a'n't so high as they was. Now, here's the real Mocha, all burnt. I haven't got any other; and I suppose you don't care, as long as it isn't ground, too. Half a dozen eggs and the oysters,—twenty and ten is thirty, and eight is thirty-eight:—thirty-eight cents. Thank you. Good-evening. A merry Christmas!"

Any one looking on would have been amused and pleased with Mr. Bean's sly

kindness, and his interest in making the children's plan—which he at once guessed —successful. They carried away nearly double the value of the money they left,—a whole pound of coffee, the oysters and the eggs for prices he would not have cared to make public. The children hurried out into the beautiful frosty air, perfectly delighted with the successful beginning of their plan.

"And—only think, Katie!—I have two cents over. I might get something for Eddy with that. I know! I'll get two pipes, to blow soap-bubbles. Only, I can't get them to-night. We mustn't go into any other store."

"No, indeed," said Katie; "but I guess in the morning, when we run out for the bread, that we'll find Wright's store open, and can get them there."

So they hurried home, and hid their

treasures carefully away, and then went down to the little warm sitting-room, which was kitchen as well, only it was so skilfully arranged with quiet grace and perfect neatness that no one would ever have imagined it was used for any other purpose than a sitting-room, had not the stove been evidently for cooking.

Mr. and Mrs. Willard sat in two arm-chairs, savings of their better days, their faces wearing deep marks of sorrow and suffering, but withal so happy that it was very pleasant to look at them. The lamp on the centre-table was bright and cheerful, and the sliding doors in front of the stove gave the effect of an open grate, and the fire-light danced out as if determined to do all in its power to add happiness to the hearts so bravely bearing their burdens that evening.

As the little girls came in, with their

cheeks rosy red from the keen evening air and their eyes sparkling with their untold joy, they made the hearts of both their parents glad; and, looking upon them all at that moment, you would hardly have believed that they were in such trouble.

"Well, my darlings," said the mother, "you look as if your walk had done you good."

"Indeed it has; and weren't we quick, mamma? and it's so nice and warm here! You've no idea how cold it is out-doors; but it's splendid, too,—such bright moonlight. Papa, do look out of the window before you go to bed. Come, Marion; let's get our arithmetic, and then we needn't study a bit all day to-morrow."

An hour after, the little family retired. Mr. Willard must go early, because so feeble, and the mother so spent her little strength through the day that she was

always glad of the hour of rest. Mr. Willard rose feebly, helped by his wife, and then walked slowly, with the aid of crutches, to an adjoining room, where little Eddy was already fast asleep in his trundle-bed. The girls were soon tucked warmly away in feathers and comforters, and mother came up for a last look and good-night kiss. Katie said,—

"Mamma, please don't get up till we call you, to-morrow morning. You know it's Christmas; and Marion and I have set our hearts on giving you a holiday. We don't want you to do a thing all day. Now, do, mamma, promise that you'll not get up till we call you, and take a good long nap in the morning. We will have every thing in perfect order; and it will be such fun."

After some little remonstrance, the mother consented, saying, "Well, I will do it

this once, to please you, and thank you, my darlings, for your sweet thoughtfulness; but I really do not need it. Your love is my greatest blessing, and something that God will never take away. It makes me very full of rejoicing this night. Bless you, my darlings! Sleep well." And, kissing them both, she went down-stairs, hardly able to see the way for the blinding tears of gratitude that these glowing little hearts were twined so close and lovingly about her.

"O my God," she whispered, as she almost felt the way down-stairs, "we have always known, but now thou art more fully teaching us, how the one thing here, as in heaven, is love. Keep these little hearts in *thy* love, and give them all else of good thou canst permit them."

Then, putting her lamp on the last stair for a moment, she yielded to one of those

impulses which sometimes seize a heart filled over-much, and, lifting her hands, her eyes, her whole soul, up to God, laid hold of him with one of those pleadings which are beyond the expression of words, or even inward thought, but which he knows how to interpret, and never fails to hear. Then, dashing away the tears and all traces of emotion, her face was again overspread with the cheerful aspect which was its usual expression.

The next morning, when the bright rising sun sent its first ray into the little kitchen sitting-room, the first thing it noticed was the perfect neatness and order that reigned. Not a bit of dirt on the carpet, not a speck of dust anywhere; a snowy table-cloth, with dishes laid in utmost precision, and the stove so clean and bright that it looked as if it had not the remotest association with cooking. Presently the bright-eyed

Katie emerged from a little pantry. She went to an opposite door and listened a moment, smiling, and then rapped, and called,—

"A merry Christmas, mamma! We give you leave to get up now. Are you awake?"

"Yes, my darling; and a merry Christmas to you. I'll soon be out."

Then was heard a gay, ringing laugh out-of-doors, and a little girl and a rosy-cheeked boy might be seen, the latter trying to carry a great brown bundle and a little brown bundle; and when he slipped on the clean white snow, he laughed, and said,—

"Oh, sister Marion, isn't it nice? my picser-book, and my pipes, and the bread for mamma! Merry Christmas! merry Christmas!"

Then the sun went behind a great black

cloud, and saw nothing more just then for half an hour; and when he came out again the very first thing he did was to peep into the little kitchen sitting-room again. And he found on the table a foaming omelet, and the clearest luscious coffee that ever was made, and hot milk, and white toast, and a little dish of potatoes, all prepared in a style worthy of a French cook. And around the table were five beaming faces,—a little boy clapping his hands and saying, "Oh, I'm so glad, so glad it's merry Christmas!" and two little girls with a joy in their faces that only comes to those who try to make others happy; and the father and mother so pleased with the love and skill of the precious hearts and hands of two devoted children. And when they had thanked and praised them for their tenderness and pains, and mamma had told them she should feel strong all

day for the delicious coffee, they all united in thanks to the kind Father in heaven, who thus far every day had given them food and shelter and the richest love; and they prayed that, though the way before them now looked very dark, he would give them faith to believe that all would be given that they required. And they all looked as if they had that faith and could rest in it rejoicing.

Then the little girls made mamma keep her promise, and sit down with a bit of light needle-work, while they cleared the breakfast-things away and put the room in perfect order, and so quietly that one might have wondered how it was all done. Then they left papa and mamma for a quiet chat, and Eddy amusing himself with his soap-bubbles, while they went off to arrange the other rooms.

Half an hour after, Mr. Barnard came in,

as he often did in the morning, bringing his paper. "It was such a charming, sunny room in the morning," he said; "just the place to keep one's spirits up while reading the news."

After the greetings of the day, he ran his eye hastily over the paper, and then, giving it to Mr. Willard, began to talk in his usual pleasant way. Presently Eddy jumped up and ran to him with a big bubble.

"What a splendid bubble, Eddy! Is that pipe a Christmas-present?"

"Yes, sir. Marion gave it to me; and I've got another; and they cost two cents. But my mamma and papa they've got heaps of money. Papa just said he'd got *five dollars*, that would last all winter."

In vain the parents tried to stop the child when they perceived that he was about to repeat what they had just been

talking over together; and their very effort to do so showed Mr. Barnard that what he said was only too true a revelation of their impending want.

"My friend, is this so? Is this all you have for the winter?" he asked.

Mr. Willard waited a moment before replying, and then said,—

"It is even so; but we meant no human friend to know it, believing God will certainly remember our necessities. But we have been very careless in speaking before this child, who was so still that we forgot he was here. Our friends have done so much, we could not go to them again; and even now I feel sure God has heard us cry and will soon answer us. Please let it pass as if you had not heard. We have faith, and enough provision for to-day. Now let us speak of his tender goodness to us daily, and how we are blessed with riches which

no earthly poverty will ever take away." And he began to tell the story of the breakfast, and the devoted love of his little girls, when there came a loud rap at the door. Before Mrs. Willard could open it, Mr. Bean walked in, with a great bundle he had just taken from his little sled.

"Merry Christmas, Mrs. Willard; merry Christmas, sir; merry Christmas, Mr. Barnard; and you, Master Eddy. A bright morning, keen and clear. I've brought you half a bag of old coffee from my store. Not at liberty to say who sent it. Not me, nor Mr. Barnard there: you needn't look at him. Some one 'twas buyin' for himself, and thought a whole bag rather too heavy a load for his old horse; and I'll warrant it to be as good coffee as ever you drank. Good-mornin'; good-mornin'. No thanks, I'm obliged to you. All in the line of business, all in the line

of business. Good-mornin'!" And away he went, laughing just as I think Santa Claus does when he rolls something down the chimney and then peeps in at the window to see the surprise he has given.

"Surely we are very kindly remembered by the Lord and by his children," said Mr. Willard, as Mr. Barnard quickly followed Mr. Bean; "and I think, Anna, this will do you more good than all the tonics the druggists could give. You have always depended so much upon it, and now again you have it. I am *very* thankful."

Half an hour after, there was another loud rap at the door. Mrs. Willard opened it, and a man asked,—

"I *say!* Does Mr. Willard live here? Well, I'm glad of *that:* have been tryin' to find him this ten minutes, and it's thunderin' cold. Here's a box came by this mornin's express. Guess I'll take it inside:

I see he's got crutches. Nothin' to pay; nothin' to pay. Thank you, marm," he added, as Mrs. Willard wished him a merry Christmas: "I guess I'll have it. Got through my mornin' rounds now, and am off for a ride with a batch of children. Nothin' like that to make a man merry, marm,—children and sleigh-bells tryin' which will laugh the loudest. I wish you the same. Good-mornin'!" And away he ran, slapping his hands against his shoulders, partly to get them warm, and partly because in so merry a mood that he must do something or every thing to give his spirits play.

A box! A box four feet square! What could it be? It certainly was directed to Rev. Henry Willard: otherwise it must have been a mistake. The sun shone on it so bright and clear that it must be daylight, and they could not be dreaming.

"A box! a box four feet square! What could it be?"
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What could it be, and who could have sent it? They stood over it, wondering, till Mr. Willard suddenly laughed, and said that the easiest way to solve the question would be to open it. Then Mrs. Willard laughed too, and, calling Katie and Marion, they soon had hammer and chisel and went to work. Eddy danced with delight. How much excitement there always is to a child in the arrival of a box by express! but in this case hardly more than to the others, though they did not exactly dance. The cover was off. On the top of a pure white napkin which concealed the mysterious contents, lay an envelope, directed to Mrs. Willard. She took it up a little nervously, and the first thing that fell out was a check on the bank. She looked at it, once, twice, three times. She thought her eyes mistaken. But no! There it was. "Pay to the order of Rev. Henry Willard one

hundred and fifteen dollars." She passed it to him, and said,—

"My husband, we know not whence it comes; but let us thank God: he has heard our prayers;" and, hastily brushing away two tears, she turned to the signature of the letter, and said, "Oh, it is from Fannie C——, the young lady who so kindly proposed to make a few things for the children. Let us see. No, children: we will not open the things till we have read the letter. Now be quiet and patient, and then you may take every thing out."

These three dear children always did as mother said; and so all listened while she read:—

"To Mr. and Mrs. Willard, Katie, Marion, and Eddy, the Society of Ministering Children send greeting, and earnest wishes for a merry Christmas. We beg you to accept, in the name of the Lord, our gift to you as our gift to him. We have worked in his love, we know that you abide

in his love, and, with that freedom and perfect understanding, that mystery of sympathy which exists only between his beloved, we venture to send the work of our hands to you, who in the forms of the world are strangers to us, but in reality does not the closest tie bind us? Your permission to do something for the children was given so truly in the spirit of his love, that as we have been led on step by step beyond that permission and our proposing, so we have done, rejoicing with great gladness and thanksgiving that he has laid the work in our hands, and believing that we have been directed by his immediate will. Means have been given us which we did not expect; thoughts have come to us—whence?—that have resulted in profit of which we did not dream. And now, with hearts rejoicing a thousand times more in sending than yours can in receiving, we once more beg you to accept our gift in the same spirit in which we believe it is tendered,—humble, Christian love.

"Very truly, yours,

"FANNIE C——,

"*In behalf of the Society of Ministering Children.*"

"DEAR MRS. WILLARD:—

"The above was dictated by the children,—not consecutively, but from time to time, when I have asked them what to say to you when we send the

box, they have given me these thoughts, which I have noted down and gathered here for you. Our society grew from the little gathering of half a dozen girls to a much larger number, who named themselves the Society of Ministering Children, from a book we are reading, a copy of which we enclose for Katie and Marion. Our means, too, increased beyond, our thought, and we were tempted to do more than perhaps we were really authorized to do for you. But, from the spirit of your sweet letter, we thought you would accept it, as we offer it, in Christ's love. Then came the thought of a quiet tea-party in our chapel, to make a little purse; and one child proposed one thing, and one another, until we had a little table of their fancy work, another of greens, and another of flowers. And if you could have seen the children's delight in sewing, in tying greens, in arranging flowers, and the final evening gathering, you would pardon every liberty we have taken. One liberty we have not taken. We beg you not for one moment to think that we have made your name public. Even the children do not know it. Now one word with regard to the money. The amount is more than we hoped, even when deducting fifty dollars sent by a friend of mine in the name of a beautiful little daughter whom God took away two summers ago. And

. take the liberty to request that the fifteen dollars over the hundred be used to relieve you from heavy household work this winter. Please excuse me for suggesting it; but the thought came to me, and I sometimes think such thoughts are not of ourselves. The cloak for you is from the mother of the little departed one.

"Joining the children in wishing you all a merry Christmas,

"Very truly, yours,

"FANNIE C——."

Mrs. Willard could hardly read this aloud. Her voice often trembled, and her eyes filled with tears, till the children wondered what could be the matter with mamma, they felt so happy and she seemed to feel so sad. They had not learned that depth of joyful emotion which brings tears. But when the letters were read, she remembered her children, and, jumping up with something of their own gayety, she began to take out the contents of the box. First there came a bundle wrapped by itself, marked

"Eddy," and another lying close beside it, marked "Marion." They opened Eddy's first. Two beautiful little suits of coarse, dark-blue flannel, jacket and pants, trimmed with a simple white braid, so serviceable, so warm, and prettier than you ever would have thought the flannel could make; an outfit of under-clothing, and *such* a picture story-book; and then, besides, there was a top! Was ever little fellow's joy so great?

Marion's bundle was like Katie's, which lay just beneath,—two new dresses for each, one of calico and one of good warm plaid, and a good outfit of other things. And the story-book,—"Ministering Children:" oh, what a feast! and pictures in it, too!

Mamma's bundle came next. A nice loose wrapper, so comfortable, and white garments, and a dress, and—"only see! Oh, mamma! mamma! A cloak! such a beautiful cloak for you! Oh, nothing, no-

thing could be so nice! and it's so warm, you can go out in the coldest days. Oh, what a merry, merry Christmas! Now for papa's things."

Four shirts, and other useful garments, and beneath every thing a dressing-gown of beautiful warm gray cloth, trimmed with blue. Was there ever such a dressing-gown of gray and blue? The children thought they had never seen any thing so handsome before. And then all must be looked over and inspected again, and smoothed, and stroked, and folded, and unfolded. And then Mr. Willard took his Bible and read aloud a psalm of praise, and then offered an outpouring of thanksgiving to God which would have moved any listener to tears, and put to shame, by its peaceful faith, the desponding or unbelieving heart.

That evening, when the children had

gone to bed, and Mr. Willard was reading an interesting book lent by Mr. Barnard, Mrs. Willard sat, apparently sewing; but her husband, looking up, saw tears streaming down the face that was always so bright to cheer him in times of trouble.

"Why, Anna, my darling wife! are you sad *to-night*? What makes you weep so, dear?"

He held his arms out to her, and she came and knelt down by him, almost sobbing there, and, laying her head on his shoulder, said,—

"Oh, Henry, Henry, I can keep the tears back when we feel the burdens and the sorrows and the want. But now you must let me weep. It will do me good; and you know it is all for joy!"

THE END.

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